

THE
INVITATIONS
OF OUR LORD

J. G. H. BARRY, D. D.



Class BV 4832

Book .B 34

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"THE CHRISTIAN'S DAY."

A Book of Meditations for the
Daily Life of a Christian.

257 pp., 12mo. cloth, gilt . . . \$1.50

Popular edition, paper cover50

Second Thousand.

"MEDITATIONS ON THE CREED."

512 pp., 12mo. cloth, gilt 2.00

Second Thousand.

"THE SELF-REVELATION OF OUR
LORD."

Meditations on the self-revealing
titles applied by our Lord to
Himself.

334 pp., 12mo. cloth, gilt 1.50

"HOLINESS, A NOTE OF THE
CHURCH."

12mo., 166 pp., cloth 1.00

Out of Print.

"THE OFFICE AND WORK OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT."

12mo. 1.50

Out of Print.

THE INVITATIONS OF OUR LORD

NOTES OF MEDITATIONS

BY

THE REV. J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

NEW YORK

EDWIN S. GORHAM, PUBLISHER

11 WEST 45TH STREET

1918

BV 4832
B34

COPYRIGHT
BY
EDWIN S. GORHAM
1918



JAN 24 1919

©CL A512215

no 1

6.7.19. Feb. 4.19.

TO
THE FORTY WHO CARE

PREFACE

These Outlines of Meditations are published in response to what seems a real demand for such books. I am asked from time to time to recommend books of outlines, and have found that the number of such books prepared for the use of the laity is very limited. I hope therefore that I am offering a book that will be useful, and in offering it I have no ambition beyond that. It is prepared on the basis of notes that have been tested in parish and retreat work and have been found not unacceptable. I have aimed at something between a fully worked out meditation and a bald outline, because that seems to me to be what many want. I have worked out the precludes fully for no other reason than that I found it interesting to do. I have prefixed at my publisher's request a paper on the method of meditation.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	INTRODUCTION: HOW TO MAKE A MEDITATION	I
II	THE INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP .	23
III	THE INVITATION TO REPENTANCE .	37
IV	THE INVITATION TO PREPARATION .	51
V	THE INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE .	65
VI	THE INVITATION TO DISCIPLINE . .	79
VII	THE INVITATION TO REST	93
VIII	THE INVITATION TO FAITH	107
IX	THE INVITATION TO DELIVERANCE .	121
X	THE INVITATION REFUSED	135
XI	THE INVITATION TO FORGIVENESS .	149
XII	THE INVITATION TO SELF-KNOWLEDGE	162
XIII	THE CALL OF URGENCY	175
XIV	THE INVITATION TO COMMUNION .	190
XV	THE INVITATION TO CHILDREN . .	205
XVI	THE INVITATION TO THE THIRSTY .	219
XVII	THE INVITATION TO KNOWLEDGE .	234
XVIII	THE INVITATION OF THE FELLOW- WORKERS	250
XIX	THE WELCOME	265
XX	OUR INVITATION TO JESUS	280

I

HOW TO MAKE A MEDITATION

PROGRESS in the spiritual life, like progress in anything else, requires effort. It requires the systematic and persistent use of means appropriate to the end we are seeking. Indeed the spiritual life is an art, in the successful prosecution of which we require careful training to perceive the values that it is worth while to seek, and to master the instruments by which those values may be acquired. From time to time, we hear of spiritual geniuses to whom the acquisition of holiness seems to cost little in the way of effort; but to most of us, I fancy, spiritual genius still remains a matter of taking pains. We may be glad that this is so, for anyone can take pains.

When once we become serious in the matter of spiritual advancement, and begin to ask what helps are available to aid us in the making of spiritual conquests, we are, among the first aids to spiritual discipline, pointed to the practice of

meditation. A friend tells me that he has found meditation most helpful, and perhaps sends me a book that has been useful to him. Or reading some book on the spiritual life we come upon the commendation of meditation as one of the advanced forms of prayer, and are led to seek further light upon this practice. We take up the practice and after a little feel that it is not helping us, and we lay it aside. Our disappointment is in proportion to the hope with which we began. I am writing these words with a purpose of helping some to begin the practice of meditation intelligently, so that they may avoid failure; and of inducing others, who think that they have demonstrated the uselessness of the practice for themselves, whatever may be the case with others, to try again in a way that, by avoiding previous errors, may perchance lead them to great spiritual profit and joy.

Perhaps the most complete characterization of the Christian life would be to describe it as a life of prayer. Whatever else may or may not be present, a prayer experience is certainly indispensable. But prayer means a great many things. A child has a prayer experience which begins with the recitations of certain simple forms taught it by its mother. These are not in any full sense, understood at the outset, and yet I think that

there is expressed through them a sense of dependence and of appeal to one outside us who loves and cares. It is astonishing to find how many there are who never get beyond this infant experience, and whose prayer life never develops to any felt need that cannot be satisfied by this simple recitation of elementary forms. In many cases, indeed, the same forms which are learned in childhood are preserved unaltered through life — the spiritual experience, as far as one sees, never gets beyond the stage of recognition of dependence and petition for providential care. In the case of others the prayers are changed, but the prayers themselves remain at the stage of petition. In fact it is not unusual to hear surprise expressed at the suggestion that there are degrees of prayer, and that petition is the lowest degree.

That, of course, is the fact. I do not mean by that, that all degrees of prayer are successive, and that we pass from one to another, leaving one behind as we enter the other, but that the prayer life so expands as to contain greater diversity of content as we press on spiritually. We never pass beyond the need of petition to express certain relations to our Father in heaven, but we do establish other relations than those that are satisfied by petition. It is quite analo-

gous to what takes place in human relation. The relation of a child to its parents undergoes great expansion and diversification as it grows in age and understanding of life. Relation to a person implies the exercise of all that is contained in our own personality, but the elements of a complex personality unfold slowly, and in the unfolding seek satisfaction in communion with other persons. Our parents are the first to call us into the conscious exercise of all our personal powers; but those powers do not find their highest and most significant exercises until we have learned how they may be exercised in relation to God.

One of the powers that earliest demands exercise is the intelligence, the power of thought. It seems to me one of the great disasters of our education, or our lack of it, is that the young are so rarely taught to think connectedly about God, and the things of God. When the time comes, as it is pretty sure to come, when young men and women have to face the fact of the existence of a systematic body of negation of all Christian truth, they are quite liable to meet it unprepared — in the possession, it is true, of certain dogmatic statements about religion, but with no real comprehension of their meaning or of the grounds of their justification. The young for the most

part, encounter religious negation, of which the modern world is full, without preparation and without means of defense.

One of the best means of defense is the habit of mental prayer — of meditation, as it is commonly called. But, of course, its primary use is not one of defense. It is a form of prayer suited for the exercise of one's intellectual nature and for the putting it into realized and conscious relation with God. In other words we start from the conviction that all the elements of our complex personality have necessary relations to God, which we must make active if our spiritual development is to be normal; that we can neither love God nor obey Him in a way fully to satisfy us unless we love Him and obey Him intelligently. Mental prayer is an effort to know the truth that the truth may make us free.

In meditation then, one's primary effort is to know, to understand. At the same time we must carefully guard this statement. What one is attempting is not a course of study, a philosophical or theological discipline, but an exercise of the mental faculties under rigorous spiritual direction. Indeed whatever study is necessary to the intellectual apprehension of the truth, which we are to meditate upon, should take place before the meditation begins. In order to profit spir-

itually we need to be free from the mechanical labor of acquiring the meaning of the terms we are to use. If one were intending to spend a half hour in meditation on a passage from one of St. Paul's epistles, one would need to make sure that one understood the grammatical meaning of the passage and its relation to the context before one began one's meditation, otherwise the half hour might pass before one were ready to meditate at all. It cannot be too much emphasized that meditation is not just study under special conditions.

It is indeed an effort to know; to know God and our relations to Him. In meditation we take a spiritual truth which is, it may be, quite familiar as a statement of fact, then try to think our way into it, as a fact with bearing on our own lives. The Incarnation, for example, is a fact. The nature of this fact we have learned in the course of our religious education, or failing that we now study it in the theological outline which every Christian ought to have as handy as his Bible or Prayer-book. But meditation on the Incarnation means taking that fact or some phase of it, and thinking out its relations to my own life and action. There are endless ways in which so large a fact can be brought into relation with life. Or take a fact more easily handled, the fact of venial

sin. Again one's education brings out the meaning of the fact,—what meditation should do is to realize the fact as a fact of my experience, and to consider the details of that experience in past and present, and to plan and resolve for the future.

Any religious truth whatever must have relation to my life, and personal religion is the finding of that relation and making it active. The sphere, therefore, of meditation is practically limitless; it covers all the truths of religion. But to get into a fruitful relation with any truth through the understanding of it, and the working out of its relation to our own lives, necessarily means not simply an intellectual exercise, but the exercise of all the powers of one's personality — a spiritual effort, that is, which cannot but be conducive to spiritual growth. Meditation, therefore, is this effort of the whole personality. It is a very efficacious instrument in our spiritual development.

Indeed, I would go as far as to say that I do not believe that there is any means of spiritual advancement, outside the Sacraments, so uniformly effective as the daily meditation. It means the steady exertion of spiritual energy, which must result in growth. Day by day we are spending a certain number of minutes in thinking out some truth, after having expressly

asked the aid of God the Holy Ghost, and in bringing the meaning of that truth home to our lives — bringing all our powers to bear on the problem: “*what is that truth to me*, what is God trying to say to me through it?” Is it necessary to make a meditation every day? one is asked. And the answer,— Yes, yes; that is, under the rubric of common sense. It is obvious that irregular and widely spaced meditations cannot exert the spiritual pressure on life which the daily meditation does. Regularity and frequency are essential to keeping one in an expectant and receptive attitude. One meditation a week, say, while it may have certain limited use, cannot be expected to accomplish the spiritual result of the daily meditation.

We shall catch the point of this if we remind ourselves that meditation is *not study but prayer*. It is the offering of our intellectual powers to God as a means through which He may make Himself known to us. While I am using all my power to think into a truth, I am really offering that power as a channel by means of which God may show me the truth. I am asking, not merely understanding, but enlightenment. So my intellectual act is an aspiration, an act of worship, an oblation of myself to the Holy Spirit. I am sure that to the intellect so consecrated, God will re-

veal Himself, and that I shall go from my meditation with further knowledge of God and of myself, and therefore better fitted to meet whatever the day shall bring. I have assimilated some portion of truth that is my growth thereby.

I think the general experience is that a meditation should be made in the morning. One's mind is then fresh and the affairs of the day have not begun to intrude themselves and make concentration difficult. It is an additional advantage (not an objection as seems commonly thought), that the process of securing the first minutes of the morning means a sacrifice — usually the sacrifice involved in rising half an hour or twenty minutes sooner than we are accustomed to. Or it might mean the adjustment of other duties to a changed schedule. In any case the securing of the early morning for the meditation is worth the sacrifice and we ought not to decide that such time cannot be given until a very serious effort has been made.

However if it is actually impossible to secure time for meditation in the morning, the meditation can be made at another time. The morning hour is selected because experience shows that that is the best time, not that there is anything so sacred about it that if one cannot meditate then there is no use attempting the meditation at

any other time. One can easily imagine circumstances in which other hours, as the late evening hours, are the only ones available. If quiet can then be secured and the world shut out, the meditation can be profitably made.

Whatever the time, the meditation will be essentially the same. I say essentially because there must be a certain freedom in detail, or we are likely to become the slaves of method; or finding a given method unworkable, conclude that we are unable to make a meditation. The latter is a very real danger because we usually begin the practice of meditating by attempting to follow the method of someone else. We may, it is true, prove docile to the method, and then all is well; but we may equally well prove recalcitrant to it, and then all is not well at all. In most cases we shall find that we have to adjust the details of method to our own peculiarities, and end in making a method which fits us and in which we can move easily. We shall not hesitate to do this, the essentials of meditation being preserved.

What is most essential is that we should learn to meditate and not learn to do something else which is a substitute for meditation, and think it the same thing, or just as good. Again, remember that meditation is not just intellectual exercise, and the same as a study period. We may

not for instance, spend several hours with a Bible dictionary and a commentary working out the meaning of a passage of scripture, and then close our books with a feeling that we have been meditating. The half hour's study might admirably prepare us for meditation — get ready for us an outline that we can use — but in itself it is not mental prayer.

Nor can we do a half hour's reading in the Bible or some devotional book, and feel that it is the equivalent of meditation. It is an excellent thing to do and therefore often presents itself as a temptation. But the very fact that we feel it easier and a relaxation from our rule, reveals its nature as a substitute for the harder thing we are attempting. Again, devotional reading, like the study of Holy Scripture, is admirable as a basis for meditation — it suggests subjects and furnishes outlines but it must not be treated as the thing itself.

There is another temptation to the misuse of meditation which crops up in some cases, and that is to make the meditation a means to a further end. A priest is tempted to turn a meditation into a sermon outline and feels that while he is helping his own spiritual life he is also accumulating material for helping others. The defect of such meditation is obvious; it is made with a

divided attention. The mind is rather more than half on the availability of thought for the sermon, and thoughts which are not so available, no matter how personally valuable, are apt to get scant attention and small development. The same thing is true of the Sunday-school or guild teacher — the temptation to make prayer a utilitarian occupation.

But these rocks being successfully avoided, and the right conception of meditation being attained, the further question arises, what are we to meditate upon? I am assuming the case of one quite new to the practice, who faces the fact that he is to begin the use of intellectual prayer, and then finds the pressing question, "what am I to pray about, on what am I to meditate?" The field of possible choice is very wide, and what is wise for one to undertake is not wise for another, and what is wise at one stage of spiritual experience is not wise for another.

I would class the available material on which to meditate as follows: 1. Devotional Books. 2. Prepared outlines. 3. Theological treatises. 4. Holy Scriptures.

1. I would class devotional books as the least helpful material on which to base one's meditation. For one thing the attempt to keep meditation and devotional reading separate is rather

difficult. One starts to read a paragraph, and then to meditate upon it, but easily reads on, either because the attention is caught and carried away, so that we forget that we are engaged in mental prayer; or because the attention is *not* caught, and we read on in hopes of falling in with a thought that is suggestive on which to base our meditation. Either way the time passes and no meditation has been made. There is another objection to the attempt to use such books as the basis of meditation, and that is that the thought is already pretty fully worked out so that there is little of that suggestiveness which is so essential to the material used as the basis of meditation. There are people who find the printed book helpful in meditation, but I do not believe they are numerous. There is one way in which a devotional book can be profitably used, and that is to make an analysis of a given page and then base the meditation on the outline so obtained.

2. The prepared outline avoids the dangers of the devotional book. It does not tempt to reading and, theoretically, it achieves suggestiveness. It is true, I suppose, that there are not many people who find it easy or, indeed, practical, to develop the meaning of a subject given for meditation without help until practice has brought them facility. The outline, therefore, is the al-

most inevitable method for the beginner. The outline gives the thought, and one turns that over and over in one's mind and appreciates it from several points of view, and applies it to one's own case, holding on to it as long as the process is fruitful. One of the temptations to be avoided in this matter is the feeling that we must get on, must finish this meditation in the half hour, and so hurry from points before we have exhausted them. This we should never do, there is never any obligation to get on.

Here we must note that not all outlines are suitable for all people. We can only tell by experimenting what books of outlines will be useful to us. We need to find a mind of a quality somewhat like our own before the thoughts of another will set our mind working. The thought-suggestions of a mystic are not likely to stimulate the so-called practical mind. On the other hand, after one's experience is sufficiently developed, it might not be a bad thing, for one type of mind to occupy its thoughts, at times, with the suggestions of the other type. It may be pointed out here that not all that you find under the head of outlines of meditation are really such. There are books which sell as outlines of meditation, which are really sermon outlines. There are others which are outlines of meditations, but

which lack the prime quality of suggestiveness. One fears that the author never meditated through them himself. The rule here is: experiment until you find out what you want.

3. I speak of theological treatises as a separate class of meditation material, because they afford the matter on which a good deal of our meditating ought to be based. Our temptation is to take material which can be rather easily handled; and the maker of meditation outlines has often been influenced by the popular dislike or dogma. Perhaps, also, there is a feeling that a meditation, in order to appeal to the affections, ought to contain a large sentimental element, if I may so define it. But surely our need, first of all, is to know our religion, and not simply to know it by intellectual analysis, but to know it in terms of our own experience. The great value of meditation is just here, in the process of translating dogma into experience, belief into life. He, therefore that would meditate profitably, must set about the work of assimilating the dogmatic facts of the Christian religion, beginning with the existence of God, and passing on through the whole of theology. Naturally one would not attempt that at a stretch. Subjects of meditation ought to be varied, from time to time, but this side of the appreciation of dogma ought not to be neg-

lected. Take a book like Darwell Stone's "Outlines of Dogma," and break it up into fragments and translate from terms of the intellect to terms of the will and affections.

4. The revelation of God in Christ, which is the subject of Holy Scripture, underlies all the material of meditation of which we have been speaking. But it has so far been presented to us in one or another form of preparation. But while the prepared forms have their value, and are usually admirable as first steps, we should always have before us that the ideal meditation will be based directly upon Holy Scripture, with no intervening working over the material. We should come to the state of experience in meditation where we should need nothing but our Bibles to work with.

This stage is not easily attained. It is, to be sure, easy to take a page from the Gospel, and dream over it for half an hour. But it is not so easy at the end of the half hour to set down any definite thoughts that we have achieved. Meditation upon the text of the Bible is difficult, because the Bible itself is not easy to understand. The understanding of it means close study with the use of a considerable apparatus of helps of one kind and another. This preparatory study the average person is unable or unwilling to do,

and hence is unfitted for profitable meditation. Moreover the attempt to meditate on the text of the Bible is exposed to the same temptation that is noted in the case of devotional books, the temptation to pass from meditation to reading. If the plain text of the Bible is to be used either (1) easily understood passages from the Gospel and Epistles should be chosen; or (2) outlines for meditation should be prepared beforehand with the aid of commentaries, etc. If there is time and ability, the last is, no doubt, the ideal form of meditation.

Assuming now that we have freed our time and settled upon a method, etc., what is the actual process of meditation? How do you do it? First of all comes the preliminary prayer, a definite prayer including an invocation of the Holy Spirit for the clearing of our minds and the direction of our intention. This done, we take up our first thought. I am going to assume that the method will be some modification of the Ignatian method, and will begin by presenting the truth we are to meditate upon, in some concrete setting which can be placed before the imagination. Let us suppose that we are starting theologically and that our theme is the article of the creed, *He was made man*. We might start with a mental picture of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Then,

with this before the mind, we pass on to recall what we know of the Incarnation, or as that is rather too extensive for one meditation, we can take up one aspect of it. For example that in this Child there are two natures perfectly united in one Person; that my nature is assumed to the Person of God, and that my approach to God is through the humanity, which He has assumed. This will give me a starting point for personal application in that I can examine myself on my use of the Sacraments as to the application of the Incarnation to me. I can then thank God for the gift of them and make acts of contrition for my failures and end with a resolution of amendment and a final prayer of thanksgiving.

That roughly enough is what one means by meditation. When we analyze it to see just what it is that took place, we find three chief elements which correspond to the three elements in our complex personality. The predominating element which gives the name *mental prayer* to the whole action, is the intellect. We are attempting first of all to understand. We want to know what a given truth means and what it means to us. We want to get life into relation to it. That means not thinking abstractedly as in a philosophical meditation, but thinking concretely about my own life as the sphere in which the

truth acts. The second form of our activity comes into view as the result of this application of truth to life. It reveals success or failure on our part, and consequently, kindles in us love or abhorrence. We love God and are grateful to Him for His action in our lives, or we realize our own failure to respond to Him, and are filled with contrition. This is the action of our affections in response to what the intellect has shown. If this response is any more than mere emotionalism, the result will be the activity of the third element in our personality; the will. The will becomes active and determines us to follow good and to flee evil.

It would appear from what has been said that the practice of mental prayer admits of sufficient variety in subject and method, to make it a suitable exercise for any Christian who is sufficiently interested in prayer to make this effort. It is perfectly true that there are many Christians who cannot use mental prayer. These are hard working people to whom lack of time is a perfectly valid excuse. There are others whose intellectual training has not fitted them for meditation. But one would do well to pause and think over one's circumstances pretty carefully, before one concludes that one is shut off from all but the least developed forms of prayer experience. To vast

numbers of Christians, neither ability nor opportunity is wanting, but the knowledge of the nature of this form of prayer or the will to practice it. And the attempt, when it is made, ends in discouragement and failure. I want, therefore, to say a few words of practical counsel, in such cases.

One of the commonest complaints is that of inability to keep the mind fixed. That, of course, is not peculiar to meditation, but is a besetting trouble of all prayers. It is easy, I think, to overestimate its importance. It is a fact that under our educational system very few of us are trained in attention. We have not learned deliberately to direct and hold attention at a certain point. The consequence is that attention follows interest, and if there is no compelling interest the mind which is turned in a certain direction may swing off. It is this *swing off* which is the wandering mind and which causes the trouble. There is nothing for it but to call it back. One soon overcomes it, to a certain extent, if one relaxes the attention deliberately for a few seconds from time to time and then calls it back with a new act of concentration. Furthermore, the mind will turn to the most vivid object of interest. It seems distressing that the mind which has been fixed on prayer, should be found to have

run off after some matter of wholly trivial interest. One feels terribly ashamed on discovering it. But the mind does not follow what we are convinced is our most important interest, or what is actually our deepest interest, for which we are prepared to sacrifice much, but it follows a vivid surface interest, an interest somewhat trivial in itself, but which is insistently present. I fancy that very few overcome this tendency to wander; we need to deal patiently with ourselves and with our infirmities in this matter.

Another frequent cause of discouragement is the seeming fruitlessness of this form of prayer. "I have been trying to make meditations," some one says, "for so many months or perhaps so many years, and I do not seem to gain anything. My meditations are wandering and cold nearly always." Now I do not believe that the value of a meditation depends in any great degree upon the facility of it. The meditation which seems to make itself, which goes on without difficulty, so that we hardly realize the passage of time, is not, by any necessity, a better meditation than the halting, troubled, wandering one, which it seems utterly futile to think of as a spiritual act at all. This last is the one which costs labor; it was less pleasant, but it may well have been more profitable. We may well have laid hold of some truth

in a manner that will make it a permanent acquisition, in this last act of prayer. The first may have been a superficial experience which vanishes as easily as it comes. Never estimate prayer in terms of ease and pleasantness.

And neither should we look to acquire spiritual habits with rapidity and ease. Curiously, many look to acquire spiritual habits almost over night. They turn from a life of sin or indifference and spiritual inexperience, and do not understand why they do not at once enter into the habits and experience of the saints. But certainly the acquisition of a new center of interest, the withdrawal of the affections from their accustomed objects, the conversion of the will may be expected to take a very considerable time. Spiritual habits are slowly built. We may be satisfied if progress is being made steadily and unswervingly toward our end — the knowledge and love of God.

II

THE INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

S. Mark I, 16-18

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Let us picture,

THIS scene by the sea of Galilee. Our Lord had come into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. There was an abruptness in the form of the announcement that might well startle men: it was as the sudden peal of a trumpet in a camp sunk in sleep. "The time is fulfilled." In theory, men had for centuries been waiting and watching for this hour. Prophets had proclaimed the purpose of God; the religious leaders of Israel had exhorted the faithful to hope and patience. We have in our minds a picture of the waiting and longing Israel. But we may be sure that those who waited and longed were few; to the majority the promise had been so long in coming that they had ceased to be expectant, and the belief in the coming of God's Kingdom was

a belief of no practical value, it contained no energy. We, too, are told to be as men expectant, standing with girt loins and lit lamps, waiting for our Lord's return. But in reality we are not so expectant; and we can imagine the effect on Christendom if some authentic voice should shatter its calm with the proclamation: *The time is fulfilled!* Israel had been somewhat shaken out of its sleep by the preaching of S. John. The preaching of Jesus struck deeper: it was like one blow following up another. It rang out with an accent of certainty: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the Gospel." It rang along the shores of the sea of Galilee, rousing the fisher-folk and filling them with new hope of Israel's deliverance. But hardly can they have expected to be called to any personal share in the bringing in of the Kingdom; it would come to them as to all Israel by the act of God. And then, this morning, as Simon and Andrew were "casting a net into the sea," as James and John were "in the ship mending their nets," the strange Preacher passed by them, and His voice took on a new accent, his words were directed to them: "Come ye after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men." See them hastily leaving their work and going after Jesus.

Consider, first,

How quiet and peaceful these men's lives had been. They had moved in a narrow circle of homely duties. They would, from time to time, have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem — for they were pious Israelites. But of what life meant in the great world, in Alexandria, in Antioch, in Athens, in Rome, they would have been all unknowing. The teaching of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms would be theirs; they would have a certain simple trustfulness in their religious leaders; but from the point of view of those leaders they were unlearned and ignorant men — men little likely to form the foundation upon which could be built a great movement of religious reform. But so far as we can see, it would be just those qualities of simplicity and trustfulness — the child-qualities — that would commend them to our Lord as material to be used in his kingdom-making. Whatever other qualities they would need in the future could be developed from these that they possessed. A little farther on in S. Mark's narrative it is said: "He ordained twelve, *that they should be with Him.*" Therein is the secret of their later power — their association with Jesus. But in the meantime Jesus has come into their lives as a revolutionary force, tearing them loose from their ac-

customed moorings, disturbing the calm and peace of their lives. The glimpses we get of them are those of men increasingly bewildered, not understanding our Lord's teaching or action, able to meet successfully no crisis on their own account, their faith rarely having the intensity to meet the demands made upon it. What then is the secret of their power to meet the demands that our Lord has to make upon them in the future? It was that through their association with Him they learned to trust Him with a limitless trust, and love Him with a boundless love. They were fit instruments to be the builders of His Kingdom because they were content to be *instruments* and did not seek to be originators: they were content that our Lord should work through them, while they contributed only the readiness of their wills. Through love and trust they came to the understanding of the supreme secret of spiritual success, that their sufficiency was of God. It is when men attempt to supplant that with their own sufficiency that they fail.

Consider, second,

That we must approach our own vocation to follow our Lord in such ways as He shall call us in the same spirit, if we are to be successful. We must have as the ground of our action a great

trust and a great love. Can we find these qualities in ourselves? What does our past life show to have been its spiritual motives? It is difficult, no doubt, to disentangle our motives so as to see them all clearly, and be able to appreciate their force one by one: nor is that needful to an adequate self-appreciation. It requires no exhaustive self-analysis to find whether we have been in the past *trusting* in our attitude toward our Lord. Trust, if it exist, is so obvious a quality, that we cannot miss it. The effects of its absence — restlessness, fear, doubt,— are widely influential. There is always something tentative and hesitant about the soul that is not trusting. It is uncertain of itself, because it is uncertain of its relation to our Lord: it is afraid to lean its whole weight upon him: it tries to lean partly on him and partly on something else for support. Where trust is not, there is no cheerfulness in religion: it sinks to the level of drudgery, becomes mere task-work. There is no love in it, because love cannot exist unless we trust him whom we love. Let us, who believe that we have been called with the supreme Christian calling — “called to be saints” — examine ourselves as to the effect that has been produced in us. Has my life been rendered peaceful, with a sense of interior quiet, so that it resists the entrance of any

disturbing elements and refuses to listen to distracting voices? The fact of vocation certifies our Lord's immediate and personal interest in us, and our response to vocation measures the extent of our appreciation of this. When we answer our Lord's call there is an outgoing of our souls toward him, which is an offering of them to the embrace of his love. We feel a separation from the world, a release from its attraction, a freedom of our spiritual powers which permits us gladly to direct them to the achievement of new conquests in the Kingdom of Grace. He who has answered God's call is filled with the peace and joy of God's presence.

Let us, then, pray,

For a growing sense of our vocation and a more perfect response to it. Pray: that God may reveal himself to you through the service to which he calls you.

Almighty and Everlasting God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that are good and acceptable unto thee; we offer unto thee our supplications, beseeching thee so to lead us to the knowledge of thy truth and obedience to thy will, that out of weakness we may be made strong, and that finally we may obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is great comfort in the thought that runs through the New Testament that we are *called* to our place in life. That back of us is neither the unintelligence of *chance*, nor the pitilessness of *law*, but the choice of *love*. "Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. . . . Thou hast fashioned me behind and before and laid thy hand upon me." This thought of our election makes us sure of God's care; but I like to emphasise this side of it: that it ensures that I can always find God. He is not a God afar off; but he is always ready to answer when I call upon him.

The thought of the Apostles would have contained much about the Messiah and his Kingdom. They were of those few who eagerly waited for the restoration of Israel. They were waiting and watching. And yet, whatever their theory about the Messiah, when he actually presented himself they had difficulty in accepting him *as Messiah*. He did not come in the form that they expected. It is one of our troubles that we make up our minds how God is going to act and then find it difficult to recognise him in the way he does act. It is one thing to dream about the Kingdom, another to accept our vocation to it.

To the fishermen of Galilee, wondering about John, whether he were the Christ or no, Jesus

came with the call to follow him. This call was imperative. He offered no explanation of his mission. His only promise was the vague one that He would make them fishers of men. They were to leave all, the father and the nets and the boats, the home and all that that meant, their means of livelihood, and go out on a life of wandering of which they saw not the full meaning.

That is essentially my call. The summons to the work of the Kingdom is as real to me as to Peter or John. It is as imperative. It comes to me as it did to them into the midst of a life of fixed interests, of settled occupations, of acquired habits. I can no more answer the divine call in the negative than they. I cannot reply, "I do not see very well how I can break up the routine of my life to which I have become accustomed. I do not think that I can rearrange the scale of my expenditure, or the time-table of my day." We are not asked about that.

The Invitation means that God wants me to *do* something. He has entered my life with a message that I am needed in the work of the Kingdom. He has singled *me* out to do a special thing. He summons me to act for him. I am to drop whatever may interfere with the call; the call comes first. *God wants me to do something.*

Have I found out what it is that God wants?

Have I considered life — my life — as the field of God's activity? Have I listened for the Voice of God? Or have I assumed that there is no special, personal message for me? Have I *so far* answered God?

Let me consider the interests of my life. How is my day spent? In one sense, these interests have been already fixed for me by the choices that I have already made. I am largely committed to a certain sort of life. I am married. I have a profession. I can no longer move with entire freedom because there are others who are concerned in my life and its actions. Let us assume that we have attempted to follow the will of God in the choices we have made so far.

But there remains a certain amount of freedom in all life. We are not utterly bound by the past. Materially we may be fixed in this place where we are, but spiritually we are free to choose.

We may choose to learn to know more of our Lord. Discipleship may be a growing experience with us. There are always new secrets in the spiritual life, no matter how far any one has gone on.

When Jesus chose twelve to be with him, although they were earnest men, they were untrained men from the point of view of our Lord's purposes. How did he train them? He trained

them chiefly by *association*. He kept them with him day by day. One fancies that there was very little of what we should call formal teaching. But there would have been constant quiet talks, after the day's teaching or preaching was over. We catch something of what they would be like in his explanation of the Parable of the Sower. We wonder sometimes that none of the Apostles left us a record of one of those quiet evenings spent on a hill-side, or by the shores of the lake, while he told them of the Father. S. John's Gospel belongs to another sphere of training than this elementary one.

The essence of the training was that they should know the Father, and know him as the revelation of the Father. On the way to that understanding, they would have to give up much in the way of prejudices and assumptions which had grown out of their previous religious history. Their great struggle would have been to gain new points of view. Our Lord's teaching was constantly striking against their ancestral Judaism. We can imagine something of the shock when, citing some settled interpretation of the Law, He set it aside with His "But I say unto you."

They learned by his life. They watched him day by day dealing with the people who flocked

about him. Thus they would learn the value of certain qualities such as sympathy, the understanding of another's case and need. They would see his kindly attempts to draw out what was best in a man or woman, to bring to light the faith which would commit itself to him; or, on the other hand, the fearless sternness with which he dealt with pride and self-righteousness.

They would have experienced this kindness with which he always treated those who came to him trusting him in the highest degree. How gentle must have been his touch on life! How their lives must have been insensibly shaped by almost unnoticed touches upon it! Just a word, a look, at the critical moment, would have set them right, recalled them to themselves. There was that about his person which called out utter loyalty and enthusiasm for him. We never read of the Apostles being disobedient or resisting. Dense, they might be, but never recalcitrant.

They shared his suffering life. That would have meant much in the way of training. It is true that none of them had ever led a life in which much in the way of self-indulgence was possible. But this shelterless, wandering life was quite different from the ordinary life of the poor. The poor have a settled way of living. Those with our Lord shared his homelessness. "The

Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." There must have been days when the tensivity of the opposition of the mob, or the threats of the authorities, would have made them feel death very near.

All this is not ancient history. There is a reality in our possible association with Jesus. *We can share his life as much as we want to.* Every one who is trying to lead the ideal life — the life which is hid with Christ in God — is really sitting at Jesus' feet seeking to learn of him. We have his Gospel in our hands and it is our fault if we have not a great familiarity with him. In all the affairs of life his words come back to us, and are our guides in the way of life. "We have the mind of Christ" — we are able to look at life as he looks at it.

And for the interpretation of this life of Christ and its application to our own needs and circumstances, we have access to the lives of those who have lived in the light and strength of it. Think what a guide to experience and practice the life of S. Paul is. And he is only one of the long line of saints whose experiences of Jesus is open to us for study. They have found companionship with our Lord a perfectly possible thing.

It is open to us to associate ourselves with his

sufferings. The call of his life is to a life of great simplicity and self-denial. We ought not to wait to have this imposed upon us; we ought to see that the following of Christ means the following in the way of discipline and self-losing. In most of our lives there are things which prevent the full manifestation of our Lord.

It is only by this association that we can be prepared for the future. The Apostles faced the life after the Ascension in the strength of their experience of our Lord. *They knew how to live.*

It is experience of Jesus that makes it possible for us to face the future with calm. We do not know what the future will hold for us. It may be joy and comfort: it may be pain and loss. But of this we are sure, that if we are faithful to our ideals of life it will hold Jesus. He will always be there — the friend at the side, ready with his help.

We are finding that so, are we not? The thing that we value most in life is our experience of Jesus. We have learned so great confidence in him through our having been with him in the days that are gone, that we face the days that are coming with serenity because we know that we shall always find him ready at our call. He is not a God afar off, but a God near at hand.

And when the day breaks, we shall see him.

Grant I may so

Thy steps track here below,

That in these masques and shadows I may see

Thy sacred way;

And by those hid ascents climb to that day

Which breaks from Thee,

Who art in all things, though invisibly;

Show me Thy peace,

Thy mercy, love, and ease.

And from this care, where dreams and sorrows
reign,

Lead me above,

Where light, joy, leisure, and true comforts move

Without all pain.¹

¹ Henry Vaughan.

III

THE INVITATION TO REPENTANCE

S. Luke XIX, 1-10

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel:

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.

Let us picture,

THIS scene that S. Luke puts before us with just a few intimate touches. S. Luke, you remember, is said to have been something of an artist: he had at any rate the artist's power to *see* effectively. We, too, see through the medium of his simple narrative. We get the impression of the crowds about our Lord; and it brings home to us the fact which, perhaps, we commonly overlook, of the *sensation* that our Lord made wherever he came. The nature of his preaching and the mighty works that he did roused men's curiosity to the highest pitch. When the news spread of his approach crowds gathered and thronged

him; he had no time to eat or sleep or pray. Here in Jericho we catch the characteristic note of the crowd — its selfishness. Every man wanted to see, and pushed his way to the front regardless of the other man who wanted to see as well. Zacchaeus, though he were chief among the publicans and rich, found that these things availed him not — he must push and make his way like another. If he had any pride, he must dispose of it for the moment; and, indeed, curiosity is a stronger stimulant than pride. We see the chief among the publicans astride a branch, looking with satisfaction over the heads of the crowd — looking at Jesus. So this was the man of whom so many startling sayings and strange acts were reported! Zacchaeus looks down — with what thoughts? And then Jesus pauses *and looks up*. Their eyes meet! There is a moment in which Jesus looks into Zacchaeus' soul and sees the manner of man he is, sees the real Zacchaeus, and the possibilities of him. Our Lord has need of this man, he can work through him; and Zacchaeus has need of our Lord and is in the spiritual state of readiness which will respond to him. So the call comes: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." See the little man climbing down and running home and making ready for our Lord. There is

pride, the sense of being distinguished by the celebrated Teacher. There is joy, too: "He received him joyfully."

Consider, first,

That Zacchaeus' approach to our Lord is prompted by a low motive — curiosity. But having approached our Lord from a low motive, he was found capable of responding to higher ones. That which is upon the surface of life is not always the unerring representative of its depths. Few of us would like to be known by our lighter, unguarded moments. The real man or woman is revealed in response to life's deeper, more searching appeals. When our Lord called Zacchaeus there was no hesitation on the part of the publican, but he gave himself to our Lord as completely as did Simon and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee. There was that in our Lord's look and voice that drew men to run after him; that suddenly changed their sense of values and caused them to think their possessions of no account, so they might win his approval. What has laid hold upon the spirit of Zacchaeus, chief of publicans, is the Spirit of Christ, and he at once sees the world through new eyes. The Guest who has come into his house has come into his soul, too: and the result of the entrance is that a new Zac-

chaeus is born — a Zacchaeus whose heart is not set upon gain, but who struggles to express himself through sacrifice, a sacrifice that shall mark the thoroughness of his break with the past and the strength of his determination to create for himself a future moulded by new motives which he begins now to perceive: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore him fourfold.” The impulse to act, to break away from, and so far as possible, destroy the past, is the mark of a true repentance. Repentance cannot be unless there be a change in our motives, an altered direction of the currents of our lives. Repentance, of all spiritual transactions, has the most obvious results. There are many things we may be uncertain of, but hardly of a sincere repentance. Zacchaeus was looking at his life through our Lord’s eyes; and though he knew so little of our Lord, he knew enough to perceive how that life must look to him. The complacency with which in the past he had, no doubt, contemplated his life is changed to abhorrence. He cannot bear to have our Lord see the old life, and he makes haste to change it. Think of the joy with which he heard our Lord’s words of approval: “This day is salvation come to this house.”

Consider, second,

What led to your **conversion**? Was there a time when you lived in sin, in neglect, in indifference? Was there a crisis in your life when you perceived that your state was a state of death, and you fled from it in horror? Or did conversion mean to you a slowly-growing apprehension of our Lord's Presence with you and will for you? However that may have been, the essence of the spiritual change that came to you was that you were turned to Christ. Conversion is our perception of and response to a Divine Presence that has come into the house of our life and wills to abide there. The emphasis may be upon our own sinfulness or upon the Divine Goodness; we may be more conscious of our need of God, or of God's need of us; but wherever the emphasis fall our appreciation of the *fact* will express itself as a need of change. *We ought to be other than we are.* Self-satisfaction will cease to be possible — the self-satisfied soul is unfailingly unrepentant. If you are being converted, you are continually feeling the need of further change in your life; of discarding that which is unworthy, of improving that which is well begun, of advancing toward a perceived ideal. You want to be rid of that in your life which reminds you of

an ill past —“ Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ”— which is not so much of a new-born love of the poor, as a perception of the goods as evidence of a past you would be free of. When the Divine Guest enters our house we forget the old complacency with which we regarded our furniture and begin to see it as it must appear to him. Very tawdry, most of the objects of our self-satisfaction appear, when we are conscious of Jesus standing in the doorway and looking about our soul-house. The ignored imperfections start into clearness. That upon which we had prided ourselves turns into an object of loathing. Our clever accomplishments manifest their dishonesty, and we make haste to rectify them — “If I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore him fourfold.” It is the preparation to receive Jesus, the sweeping and garnishing of the house that he may enter in and dwell there; and with it there is a pathetic yearning to hear him say: “This day is salvation come to this house.” The soul that is being converted is humble and self-forgetting, and stands with eyes downcast, waiting for Jesus to take it to his love.

Let us, then, pray,

For the grace of a true conversion. Let us pray for grace to break with sin utterly. Pray,

that like Zacchaeus, you may gladly give yourself and all that you have to our Lord.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Co-eternal Word of the Father, who didst become like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, for the salvation of our race, and didst send forth thy Disciples and Apostles to preach and teach the Gospel of thy Kingdom, and to cure all sickness and all infirmity among thy people; Do thou thyself, O Lord, send out thy Light and thy Truth, and enlighten the eyes of our minds to understand thy Divine Word. Give us grace to be hearers of it, and not hearers only, but doers of the Word, that we may bring forth good fruit abundantly, and be counted worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. And to thee, O Lord, our God, we ascribe glory and thanksgiving, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

.

It is natural to think that our approach to God must be preceded by the purifying process of penitence. That is true when we begin to prepare for definite acts of approach as the reception of the Sacraments.

But before we get so far *God approaches us*. God takes the initiative. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "To-day I must abide at thy house."

The call to discipleship precedes repentance and underlies it. If he had not called, we should not have come. We are not likely to find our need of God, until we have heard of God's need of us.

If we are dealing with Christians we can begin with repentance as a necessity in approaching God. One who understands anything of the meaning of God will understand the need of purity in those who present themselves to him. But if one is dealing with unbelievers, they must first be shown God before they can understand the meaning of repentance.

One reason is that it is only after we have seen God that we are able to understand ourselves. Our boasting and egotism seem silly when we stand before God.

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul,

is intolerable to one who has realised his creaturehood and his ceaseless dependence on God. Then we can only say "now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I loathe my words, and repent in dust and ashes."

There is much difficulty in making those who have always lived in sin understand the meaning of sin. When you speak to them of sin they do

not very well understand you. Sin seems to them the natural way of life. Their ignorant or deadened conscience never suggests to them that they are in the wrong. They will look about them and compare their lives with the lives of others in the same social stratum and assert that they are as good as others. They are living the life that others live. That is true: what they need is to be led to see their lives, not in comparison with other men, but in contrast with the purity of God.

What we need is to see our Lord as the ideal, and then to feel the compulsion of the ideal. What those who are being awakened to repentance feel is not so much *guilt* as *failure*. They see what they might have been and it fills them with regret: they see what they may yet be and it stimulates them to action.

That God calls us to discipleship will afford an ever-deepening motive to preparation. As the call of God becomes more pressing, the vision of him becomes clearer. We find that we are being driven to deeper self-knowledge. There is an ever-growing sense of the meaning and need of purity.

Lord, at thy feet my prostrate heart is lying,
Worn with the burden, weary with the way;
The world's proud sunshine on the hills is dying,

And morning's promise fades with parting day;
Yet in thy light another morn is breaking,
Of fairer promise, and of pledge more true,
And in thy life a dawn of youth is waking
Whose bounding pulses shall this heart renew.

Oh! to go back across the years long vanished,
To have the words unsaid, the deeds undone,
The errors cancelled, the deep shadows banished,
In the glad sense of a new world begun;
To be a little child whose page of story
Is yet undimmed, unblotted by a stain,
And in the sunrise of primeval glory
To know that life has had its start again.

I may go back across the years long vanished,
I may resume my childhood, Lord, in thee,
When in the shadow of thy Cross are banished
All other shadows that encompass me:
And o'er the road that now is dark and dreary,
This soul made buoyant by the strength of rest,
Shall walk untired, shall run and not be weary,
To bear the blessing that has made it blest.¹

The place of fear in repentance is small. Fear does, no doubt, in some cases, lead us to seek a way of escape. But ordinarily fear is a sterile quality. The true fear that we ought to have is the fear to disappoint God. The fear that hav-

¹ Matheson.

ing received so much from him, we should bring forth no fruit.

One of the fruits of repentance is a thing that we are often missing. Out of repentance should be born joy. "He received him joyfully." We shall find this joy if repentance is not to us a perpetual weary dealing with our sins, but the making ready of our house to receive the Divine Guest. The depression of the penitent comes from his self-isolation. I, he thinks, must get ready, and then the Guest will come. In reality, unless the Guest comes and helps us we cannot get ready. We do not repent of our sins and come to Jesus: Jesus is the great Penitent who comes to us to help us to bear our sins. "Bring them to me," he says. We do not even take them off and lay them upon him. He lifts them off.

The joy of the life of penitence is that it is lived so intimately with Jesus. We feel so keenly our needs and find him so ready to help. As we look at him we feel by turns the ignominy of sin, shame at having failed him and not been true, and the joy of his presence and help, though it be a help made necessary by sin. Joy and sorrow are the mingled strands of our penitence.

The true penitent does not want sin; he does not deliberately select it. If he falls it is through surprise or weakness. What he truly does not

cease to want is Jesus. That is why his self-examination is so searching; why he wants to know himself to the last thought. He is seeking to remove whatever in any degree can prevent his full joy in Jesus.

But, you ask, "Do you mean that there is no pain about repentance, no sorrow, no shame?" Not at all.

Has it never happened to you to have to tell one whom you very much loved that in some way you had wounded that love and proved unworthy of it? In the telling there was shame, there was intense pain. Shame and pain are there in a much higher degree than if you were confessing that you had injured one for whom you cared nothing. But in the actual experience the shame and the pain are transfigured inasmuch as they are mingled with love and forgiveness. The love burned them up, and in burning them, itself burned the brighter. "Now I know how much you love me," you said.

Such repentance finds itself impelled to offer. It cannot be content until it has externalised itself. That is what is meant by a penance, an externalisation of the love of the penitent in an offering of some sort. That is the impulse to many of our good works. They are embodied love and therefore pleasing to God. "Behold,

the half of my goods I give unto the poor."

If our giving sprang out of the sense of having received from God, if it was a joyous offering in recognition of the love of God manifested in our forgiveness, surely good works would be a larger element in our experience. Our niggardly giving shows small sense of love and gratitude.

What can I spare? we say:

Ah, this and this,

From mine array

I am not like to miss:

And here are crumbs to feed some hungry one:

They do but grow a cumbrance on my shelf:—

And yet, one reads, our Father gave his Son,

Our Master gave himself.¹

The result of the self-giving of the penitent is that salvation is experienced. "This day is salvation come to this house." To experience salvation is to find oneself in union with our Lord. "My Beloved is mine and I am his." We find that the barriers have been broken down and we have entered presently in some degree into the joy of the Lord.

Penitence, then, is the clearing of the soul that it may have the vision of God. "Let him that thirsts to see God, clean his mirror," said Richard of S. Victor.

¹ Frederick Langbridge.

Nothing can stand between the love of the penitent and its object. Love breaks down all obstacles, and insists on coming to our Lord.

The Magdalen at Michael's gate
Tirled at the pin;
On Joseph's thorn sang the blackbird,
"Let her in, let her in!"

"Thou bringest no offering," said Michael,
"Naught save sin";
Sang the blackbird, "She is sorry, sorry, sorry;
Let her in, let her in."

"Hast thou seen the wounds," said Michael,
"Knowest thou thy sin?"
"She knows it well, well, well," sang the blackbird;
"Let her in, let her in."

When he had sung himself to sleep,
And night did begin,
One came and opened Michael's gate,
And Magdalen went in.¹

¹ Henry Kingsley.

IV

THE INVITATION TO PREPARATION

S. Mark VI, 31

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Let us picture,

THE Apostles in a desert place alone with Jesus. They had just come back from the preaching mission on which he had sent them out. It was the first work undertaken for him; and we can understand that it had been exhausting work — so many people to see, so many questions to answer, so many new questions that would have arisen in their minds the answers to which they would be eager to ask Jesus. And when they were come to him there was so little opportunity to ask him anything — “there were many coming and going,” — all the bustle of a city’s

life. So Jesus, knowing their mind, leads them out to be alone with him. Try to see them sitting about our Lord — resting. There is quiet here in the desert place — and peace. It was, perhaps, some hill-slope to which they had climbed after leaving the “ship” in which they came. They could look down on the levels at the shore where the “green grass” shone in the sunlight and the sparkling waters of the lake rippled upon the shore. In the distance there were the fishers’ boats which were already following them. It was to be but a brief rest, for the people had heard where Jesus was gone and were coming after him. But there was a little space in which they might look at Jesus and hear his words. One fancies them impatient of the intrusive crowds which were to break up their day of retreat. By this time they wanted teaching which was not such as our Lord gave to the multitude — teaching which was for themselves alone; with a more intimate note of self-revelation, with an unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom which it was theirs alone to receive. They must have hungered for such quiet hours when Jesus dropped the parable and spoke to them plainly of the Father, of his own mission, of the Kingdom. Even though the truths that he unveiled to them were only half grasped, they

would lie in their minds as things to be pondered over, to be talked of among themselves in many an after hour — treasures hid in a field the meaning of which would be found in later days when the Spirit would bring to their remembrance all the things that Jesus had spoken unto them.

Consider, first,

That while every word and act of our Lord would add to their knowledge of him; each new parable and miracle, each new display of his power or manifestation of his mercy contributing to build up their many-sided experience of him; yet it would be in the hours of more intimate intercourse that they would come to learn his secret. It would be the words spoken while they were with him in the way, or when they were gathered about him in the house after the day's ministry was over, or on the rare days when he led them apart into the solemn silence of the wilderness, which would make known to them, as far as they were able to receive it, the hidden purpose of his coming. Gradually the conviction, not only of his greatness, his purity, his Divine Mission, but of his *difference* was growing upon them. As the Gospel-story unfolds there comes into the narrative of their intercourse with him a sense of deepening mystery and awe. There is a

shade of perplexity that we had not felt before — a sense of a far-reaching meaning in our Lord's acts and words which they cannot follow — “we cannot tell what he saith.” What they were being trained to was not so much to catch more readily the meaning of his words, as to trust more absolutely himself. Their power of apprehension often fails, but their faith grows limitless. Then, too, in the later days of his ministry we feel that the Apostles were more alone with our Lord. He held himself more aloof from the crowd and opened his mind more to his followers. And if in these days his difference from them was more sharply accentuated, the intensity of his love was more keenly felt. If they seemed to understand less, they had reached a capacity for deeper love and sympathy. We feel that it was through their experience of our Lord in these latter days of his earthly life that they were being awakened in spiritual capacity — that they were being transformed from the simple men they had been to men able to respond to the demands for heroic service which their future life was to bring them. To have lived with our Lord through Passion and Holy Week must have left them so deeply marked with the Cross that, however at moments they may have failed, its vision of love and sacrifice would be theirs forever. We are unable to think

of them as ever permanently falling back to earlier ideals of life.

Consider, second,

That we are called to prepare ourselves for the service for which our Lord may need us. We are never sure of the details of that service, of what the future may hold in the way of divine demands upon our lives, but we are sure that there will be service of some sort for him. We know too that the mode of preparation is through intimacy with him. We must accustom ourselves to go apart with him into the desert place where, separated from life's distracting bustle, we may listen undisturbed to the words that he speaks. For the greater part of our time we are in the thick of life's business, where there are many coming and going. The confusing pressure of necessary occupations, the thronging claims upon our time and attention, the unavoidable drain upon our energy, make it imperative that we rescue time for recollection and silence. Under our modern conditions we find it difficult to gain a minimum of time. When we have rescued a few moments for ourselves we find that it is only the body that we have led aside — the mind remains in life's market-place where the busy thoughts come and go. What real intercourse with our God is possible

for us moderns who are born into an environment which consumes life in a series of external activities; which regards quiet, silence, recollection, as the synonyms of sloth, and cracks the whip of contempt over idlers in prayer and meditation? How can we maintain any thought of spiritual things, not to say any Vision of God? The struggle to maintain any spiritual level of thought and life is tremendous: but the issues too are tremendous — we must succeed, or remain spiritual dwarfs and weaklings, incompetent servants and faithless citizens in the Kingdom of our Father. We cannot so much as live spiritually to any purpose unless we live in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. Are you insisting that your life shall be a life spiritually based — a life hid with Christ in God? Are you battling with the ever-encroaching materialism of life that there may be time and place for the development of your spiritual faculties? We need Christ — need him sorely — in our daily traffic in the market-place: but if we would have him with us there we must learn of him in the wilderness whither he calls us to come with him; where we can sit at his feet and look into his eyes and listen to his teaching, if it be but for an hour snatched now and then away from the crowds that hasten after and steal from

us our precious peace. Ministry is a great thing and a glorious; but can we minister unless we have first been alone with Jesus and learned the Gospel from his lips?

Let us, then, pray,

For opportunities to be alone with Jesus. Pray him to lead you out into the desert place and there make himself known to you. Pray for strength to command your time.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst say to the Disciples, Come ye apart into a desert place and rest awhile: Grant, we beseech thee, to thy servants now gathered together, so to seek thee whom our souls desire to love, that we may both find thee and be found of thee; and grant that such love and such wisdom may accompany the words spoken in thy Name, that they may not fall to the ground, but may be helpful in leading us onward through the toils of our pilgrimage to that rest that remaineth, where nevertheless they rest not day nor night from thy perfect service, who livest and reignest God forever and ever.

.

It brings home to us the practical wisdom of our Lord's dealing with his disciples to find him providing for a time of rest. Any life which is subjected to a constant strain must relax at times

or else break. Our Lord himself found the need of times of silence when he could be alone with the Father. Even he could not give out all the time; he must spend time in recruiting his strength.

It is not idleness that the tired man needs so much as change. Relief comes through the change of direction in activities. When we are world-weary, and our nerves are exhausted in dealing with others, or our muscles are exhausted in the daily work, the best remedy is spiritual activity. If we can turn away for a time from whatever has been occupying us and turn ourselves to God and consider our relation to him, we shall find refreshment.

In the strain to which the Apostles were subjected, and still more in view of the strain to which they were in the future to be subjected, such times of pause must have been an essential part of their training. One imagines that our Lord provided for them such times more frequently than has been recorded.

In these days in which we have to live, the pressure of the world on life is tremendous. There are indeed many coming and going, and any moments of quiet have to be snatched as we can. The speeding up process in modern industrial life, we are told, is responsible for a great increase in

the number of accidents. Attention and alertness give way under the strain. The like undoubtedly happens in our spiritual experience. Many of our failures could be avoided; they occur because we do not take time to be sure of what we are doing — time to consider whether what life is presently offering us is a temptation or an opportunity.

To meet life sanely and collectedly we need preparation. We must estimate what we have to meet and how we are to meet it. We fail to do this, and then are surprised at our failure in some crisis. But we made no preparation to meet any crisis. We did not seek to accumulate strength through communion with our Lord. We did not seek to clear and illumine our judgment through meditation on his word and will. We did not practice ourselves in eager service. How can an inert Christian expect to meet a sudden demand for action? How can an ignorant Christian expect to decide the questions which fall to be decided from day to day, to meet attacks, objections, inquiries?

We can not be far wrong if we say that our spiritual success in dealing with practical problems, is based on the times that we spend apart with God. I of course include in this estimate the time we spend in our prayers. In very oc-

cupied lives this time for prayer needs to be guarded with great jealousy. We need to learn how much can be accomplished in a few moments, if we have the power of concentration. We can do much in five minutes — for we are not heard for our much speaking. Are you skilled in utilising the little breaks in the day which give you a few moments' free time? Can you pray anywhere, in any position, under any circumstances where there are moments of quiet?

Much of life comes for us as a surprise. If we are to meet it effectually, we must be habitually prepared. On the other hand, many of the events of life can be foreseen and prepared for. Everyone knows whether he has to choose a profession or not; his education is supposed to be preparing him for it. But how often do we find any one spiritually preparing for his life's work? A boy is to study law or medicine — are his parents anxious about the spiritual preparation of the years which lead up to it? What preparation is visible in modern life for marriage? Are parents spiritually fit to assume the care of children?

Some one is perhaps thinking that a great many things happen which do not show on the surface. How can one know what has been the prepara-

tion for a wedding, for example? Well, the kind of wedding that is commonly preferred tells something,—the preference for a social show over a mass, for instance.

One gathers something also of the course of people's spiritual thought in the things they ask prayers for. There is a curiously conventional routine about that. There seem to be certain, not very important, things that it is customary to ask prayers for, and there is very little variation.

The foundations of the spiritual life need to be laid very deep if they are to bear the weight of the superstructure which we are to erect upon them. Is it not true that much of the foundation-laying of character, in religious education and so forth, is pitifully superficial? Go down the street and watch the way the foundations of a skyscraper are laid; and then think of the spiritual education of any children you may happen to know.

Any one to whom the spiritual life seems a matter of vital importance will try to find special times of rest and retirement during the year.

There is the long retreat which is now offered so widely by our different sisterhoods. This is invaluable, and probably oftener possible than we imagine. Three days of utter quiet and rest with

God, amid surroundings which help us to realise the divine Presence, give just the spiritual tonic that most of us need.

Then there is the Quiet Day. So many of these are offered each year that no one who really wants to make the day's retreat need fail to do so. If such a quiet day is to be profitable at all it must be entered upon as a spiritual work we are undertaking with all seriousness. One sometimes feels that people are running about to Quiet Days, very much as they run about to hear favorite preachers, and are just listening, and saying, "How wonderful!" and doing nothing else.

Failing either the Retreat or the Quiet Day, it is often possible to make one's own retreat, either in one's home, or in some Convent or Retreat House. In the latter, one can have the advantage of guidance; but it is quite possible to gain all the spiritual rest and advantage at home, if one takes the trouble to secure the requisite isolation. Of these perhaps only partial Quiet Days it ought to be possible to keep several during the year.

I may seem to repeat, but it cannot be insisted on too strongly that our capacity to meet life christianly depends on our having first met God. This is not true only of supreme vocation, such as the Religious Life, but it is true of any life. The man cannot stand the strain of business, the

woman the strain of family life, without that. But you say, perhaps, they do. I do not think so. They meet life in terms of materialism, and in terms of materialism are successful. But they are not successful in terms of the Sermon on the Mount. I am speaking only of life whose ideal is spiritual.

It is in these times of quiet and recollection that we develop in the friendship of our Lord. We can imagine that the Apostles, gathered about our Lord in some desert place where they had at last found stillness, would learn more of him than they would in many days amid the crowds. Then, too, it was there that they would have the opportunity to assimilate what had been the impressions of the other days.

That wonderful quality of friendliness toward our Lord that we find in the Saints is the outcome of the long, quiet hours of spiritual intercourse which have been at the bottom of their experience of him.

All this that I am saying about the need of quiet is not a counsel of perfection; it is a necessity if we are to have any more than a very elementary spiritual experience. "I think God will accept me if I do my duty." That, of course, always means, "If I do *not* do my duty, but something that I fancy will do just as well. And it is not to

the point in any case, since it is not a question of salvation that we are dealing with, but a question of spiritual growth and maturity. It is a question of *Christ being formed in us*. There are those who want religion on the lowest terms, there are others who are looking for a cheap religion. We are concerned with neither.

The loving care of our Lord is shown in his invitation. He is willing to give us personal attention. He will be with us in our times of retirement as truly as he was with the Apostles when he led them apart.

Again and again we feel the need of this rest with our Lord, and have not the power or the determined will to gain it. The nerves become strained, the mind will not work any more at the problems we have to face, we are ready to sink under the burden of life. Then is the time we want the quiet with God. Then we want to find the heaven that is about us here — to pass out of the storm into the harbor.

And I would be where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

V

THE INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE

S. John I, 39

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.

Let us picture,

S. JOHN BAPTIST and his two disciples, "looking upon Jesus as he walked." It was in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, the day following our Lord's baptism. S. John Baptist's ministry culminated in his witness to our Lord: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." We can imagine the feelings of these two disciples whose hopes had been kindled at the fire of S. John's preaching, when they heard his announcement. We see them standing there by S. John as Jesus passes; and then, as though an unseen power had laid hold upon them, they turn abruptly from S. John and follow Jesus. What drew them? A new-born

expectancy that in this man was the hope of Israel, an inrush of conviction that they must know more of him? Yes; and this expectancy would pass into a faith which would deepen and become extinguishable as they came to understand that the hope of Israel was also the hope of humanity, and that it was theirs to be gathered into and made partakers of his work. The Holy Spirit of Jesus was drawing them that they might run after him. Jesus was conscious of their coming. He is always conscious of our slightest movement toward him: he does not wait for us to reach him, he comes to meet us. See him turning and asking, "What seek ye?" Their answer betrays how little they themselves knew their motive; they are unable to put into words the dim hope that was in their souls. Instead they ask, what they were not at all seeking, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" One fancies that our Lord smiled a little at their question, and then followed it with his invitation, "Come and see." See them following our Lord as he led them to the place where he dwelt! It is surprising to us to learn that he dwelt anywhere. But indeed he was seeking a new dwelling — seeking that he might dwell in their hearts by faith. While they abide with him that day, wondering, he is entering into them to abide forever.

Consider, first,

The spiritual alertness of these disciples of S. John Baptist. We feel, do we not? as we read the story in the Gospel of S. John, that the circle that surrounded the Baptist was all athrob with expectancy; an expectancy that his preaching aroused till it widened out in great waves which did not sink to peace till they had rippled on the placid surface of Pharisaic self-control. Near the center the spiritual disturbance was great. Men's hearts were aglow with new hopes — hopes that were ready to energise into action. To them there was nothing final about S. John — he himself pretended to no finality. He was only the herald of the dawn: and his intimate disciples were eagerly awaiting the events which should explain and justify his ministry. Therefore it was, this day, that the words of the Baptist set them running after Jesus. Their spiritual instinct, which was none other than the voice of the Holy Spirit, turned them to Jesus as the answer to all the questions that the Baptist had raised. Consider, that it was their *need* of Jesus that sent them to him — the restlessness that had come upon their spirits sought rest in him. The human teacher had done what he could — *aroused desire*; but no human teacher can *satisfy desire*. He can

only point beyond himself as S. John did. He must always warn his disciples, "There is one that cometh after me," and the disciple must press on from the teacher to the Coming One. These two disciples sitting at the feet of Jesus in the place where he dwelt, through all the remaining hours of the day, are forever the type of those who have found. All that they need is in Jesus: henceforth they have only to drink from this inexhaustible source. The hours of that day, we know, must have passed all too quickly; but though the day passed, Jesus did not pass. He never again passed out of their lives, but passed into them, where he still dwells and will dwell forever. Their unmeaning question has found unexpected answer. They have found where he "dwelt"; and there, their labors over, they too dwell. Where he is, there are his servants also.

Consider, second,

The two disciples who followed Jesus were acting upon the rule that he himself was to lay down for the guidance of our lives: "Ask and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This is the law of spiritual experience, a law which has been verified by all the saints. Have you verified it? — for each one must verify it for himself. No man

can find the truth of Jesus for another: all he can do is to point out something of the way. The Way itself, which is Christ, we must walk in step by step, building our own personal experiences as we go, till from the Cross-crowned summit of some Calvary we see the City spread before us in bewildering beauty, and hasten toward it across the intervening Valley of the Shadow. To know Christ and be known of him — that is the meaning of our pilgrimage. It is fundamental that we be spiritually alert, eager, insistent; that we ask, seek, knock. We must learn to use each scrap of spiritual experience we gain as the vantage-point from which to go on to deeper experiences. Each experience of our Lord is indeed a *revelation* — a revelation that reveals more than itself, that reveals possibilities before unperceived. All spiritual experiences are related, and we cannot have one without some glimpse of others: we cannot have one prayer answered without gaining light upon the whole meaning of prayer; we cannot possess our Lord in one communion without being lifted to some knowledge of what it means to live in him. Spiritual experience spreads through life, consuming its darkness, as the sun drives its light into the valley, shattering the over-hanging mists. The light of the sun is force; and the illumination of the Spirit is

force — vital force energising all that it touches. Has your relation to our Lord resulted in a release of spiritual power from him, unlocking the power of his spirit so that it surges out overwashing the dry places of your life, and changing the tiny streamlets of your spiritual activity to deep-flowing streams of conscious power?

Let us, then, pray,

For an ever-growing experience of our Lord. Pray, for energy to go “from strength to strength.”

Almighty God, who didst give such grace unto thy holy Apostles, that they readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; Grant unto us all, that we, being called by thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil thy holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Lord frankly offers himself to the test of our experience. God has done that all along. “Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.” “Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” And so our Lord:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls.” “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.” “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

The striking thing about these offers of God is that they are so rarely accepted. God challenges us to try him and we decline. That was the course of Ahaz: “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.” It sounds very pious—as though we were leaving everything in God’s hands. In truth we are avoiding knowing the will of God because we have a very shrewd surmise that it is quite contrary to what we want to do.

Men are continually declaiming about the difficulties of belief; of the unreasonableness of being asked to believe what they cannot understand. And all the time God is offering to lead us to the understanding of truth in the only way that it can be understood, that is by experience of it. Some one may tell us about the fragrance of a lily, but we only understand what it is when we have smelled it. So we can be told about the forgiveness of sins, but we only find the truth of the words in the joy of absolution.

It is notable that when our Lord calls his disciples he does not attempt to explain to them the nature of their vocation. He asks them to come and associate themselves with his life and work. It is only thus that they can come to understand what the Kingdom of God means. He offers himself as the proof of his mission. They must have confidence in him, must take him for what they have so far found him. The test that he later lays down for the judgment of others he now submits to himself. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Such a course requires the initial venture of faith.

The case is not essentially different to-day. As we each one face the Christian Religion as a personal call to us, and consider our answer, we have to pass by the same road from faith to experience. The Christian Religion has not been in such wise demonstrated in the centuries of the past that we can be excused from the venture of faith. It is not possible, as a preliminary to acceptance of belief in God, to sit down in a study and work out a consistent theory of the universe that shall be in all respects satisfactory, and then accept God as the conclusion of a process of demonstration. If the Christian Religion is proposed to us, it is useless to try to settle all the questions that can be raised and answer all the

objections any one can think of, before we make up our minds. The only final demonstration is the demonstration of experience. The preliminary question we have to answer is: Is there enough evidence to justify me in making experiment? Are the issues involved important enough to demand that I shall act on such evidence as I have?

Whether one be approaching Christianity for the first time, or approaching a more advanced stage of it than one has as yet attained to, it is sufficient that one see:—

I. The promise of Christianity. That it is a religion that claims to reveal to us God. There are many religions that have offered us knowledge of God, and if we have tested them we have found them failures. Here is another offer,—an offer to show us that God is a loving Father. It offers to deal with the sin that we feel is stamping our lives with failure, and to reveal to us a Saviour who will rescue us from the guilt and the power of sin.

II. That as ground for action it offers us the history of the Christian community for almost two thousand years. That history contains the assertion by unnumbered multitudes that they have tested the promises of Christianity and found them true. That they have, in fact, found

God as Father, Saviour and Sanctifier. They have found that the promises of the Gospel are utterly true.

That would seem to be a sufficient justification for committing oneself to a test of the doctrine to find whether or not it is of God.

Of course one cannot (and that is one peculiarity of Christianity) test Christ's Religion in detachment and in the spirit of an experimenter. It cannot be demonstrated in a laboratory and then accepted. It can only be tested by complete self-committal. One has to make experiment in the spirit of Abraham who went out from his native land relying on the word of God alone. From experiment to experience is the law; but the experiment is not the experiment of the scientist, but of the lover.

We talk much of the scepticism which withholds from the acceptance of Christianity. That is indeed a lamentable fact. But in my experience the deeper foe of Christianity is that scepticism of the Christian which withholds from the attempt to master the higher reaches of Christian experience. There are so many who seem quite content to live in the lower ranges of spiritual experience and practice. But it is really only in the higher reaches of experience that Christianity justifies itself. It is not justified by the great

body of nominal Christians who interpret Christianity as a good moral life, and even so, mean by moral life not a Christian life, but a life conformed to the conventional morals of the time and place where they live. The justification of Christianity is not that it makes this world better, — that it is of solid worth in the development of society. Christianity is justified by the men and women on the outposts who have found its significance in a life of sanctity. It is justified in the experience of the experimenters who take risks.

The mass of mankind do not pass their time in making experiments. They cannot be expected to do so. They are content to take the results arrived at by the experimenters and appropriate them to their use. The solid merchant gets rich by the exploitation of the results of scientific research. He absorbs acquired results but makes no contribution. The advance is made by the men who spend their lives in experimentation.

The Saints are the chemists, the prospectors, the explorers of spiritual humanity. They are the men who take our Lord at his word and push out into the deep. They trust themselves to the great promises of the Gospel, and their trust has been justified.

There is this difference: you can make use of

the discoveries of the chemist or the biologist without becoming a chemist or a biologist yourself; but you can only fully use the discoveries of the Saints by walking in the same way that they walked. When you will have used their method fully you will yourself have become even as they.

The advantage that you and I have is that the country which we are invited to traverse is no untravelled wilderness. We go after our Lord. We go by paths that have been trodden into extreme visibility by the oft-repeated passage of the Saints. We are not seeking some fountain of youth, some El Dorado, on the basis of vague reports. We are travelling toward a goal that has been reached over and over again. Those who tell us, know. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

The very greatness of the promises sometimes stagger us. We are invited into union with the Incarnate Life of God. That is so great and wonderful a thing that our imagination fails us, and we do not lay hold of the truth. But the old saying is true, that God became man that man might become divine. The worst kind of unfaith is unfaith in the possibilities of our own nature as it is renewed in Christ.

The soul wherein God dwells,—
What Church could holier be? —
Becomes a walking tent
Of heavenly majesty.

How far from here to heaven?
Not very far, my friend,
A single, hearty step,
Will all the journey end.

Though Christ a thousand times
In Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee,
Thy soul is still forlorn.

The cross on Golgotha
Will never save thy soul,
The cross in thine own heart
Alone can make thee whole.

Hold thou! where runnest thou?
Know heaven is in thee —
Seek'st thou for God elsewhere,
His face thou'lt never see.

O, would thy heart but be
A manger for His birth;
God would once more become
A child upon the earth.

Go out, God will go in,
Die thou — and let Him live.
Be not — and He will be.
Wait and He'll all things give.

O, shame, a silk-worm works
And spins till it can fly,
And thou, my soul, wilt still
On thine old earth-clod lie? ¹

¹ Anon.

VI

THE INVITATION TO DISCIPLINE

S. Mark X, 21

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Come, take up thy Cross, and follow me.

Let us try to picture,

THIS young ruler running along the road to meet Jesus. He had heard so much of Jesus, and what he had heard had filled him with longing to know more of him, to be with him. He had nothing to do; his wealth had set him free; and he would give his time, his strength, to learn the secret of which Jesus was possessed. See him now kneeling at the feet of Jesus and asking, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It was no low ideal or longing for commonplace things that brought him to our Lord. There was a great ambition in his soul, and one which, so far as he was able to see himself, was perfectly honest. He had been living a religious life; he had submitted to the restraints of the commandments — a difficult thing for a

wealthy youth. And his religion was not the round of a decorous habit; we feel, do we not? the glow of a fine enthusiasm behind his words; we see a face looking into the face of Jesus which is lit by the light of a pure desire. He was real as far as he knew himself — though that was not very far. So “Jesus beholding him, loved him”: loved him, and would have him for his disciple. See those looking into each other’s face, seeing the light in each other’s eyes. How near this young man is to achieving his ambition, to the attainment of eternal life! But there is one thing that had not entered into his mind: that eternal life is purchased by sacrifice, that between him and it stretches the Way of the Cross. Hear Jesus proposing this way to him: “One thing thou lackest: Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy Cross, and follow me.” So the love of Jesus proposes, offering itself as the way to the knowledge of the Father and union with him. Watch the light die out of the young man’s face, till he stands as some stricken thing as the meaning of the invitation sinks into his soul. See his head droop on his breast; see him turn away from Jesus and retrace with hesitating steps the way that he had come — running. See him going into the distance, sad

and grieved. And see Jesus watching him go. "He had great possessions"; but the greatest of all, the love of Jesus, he threw away, that he might keep his gold.

Consider, first,

That the wealth that set him free to follow Jesus, bound him to the world so that he could not follow. Perhaps he had conceived that following our Lord would mean greater expenditure, the adding of some new practises to life, a certain change in his habits; but he had not imagined it as the adoption of a naked, wandering life, dependent on the charity of others. He had perhaps thought that he was making an experiment from which it was easy to turn back — but you could not turn back with all your money gone. Up to this time he had not felt his riches as a bar to the approach to God; rather, no doubt, he had regarded them as a mark of the divine favor. When a picture of life without them was placed before him he saw for the first time what riches were to him. He had thought of them as giving liberty to use his life as he would, but they turn out to be a severe limitation of his liberty; they prevent him from willing any radical change in life. He could do anything *with* riches, but he could not do *without* them. It was revealed that

his final trust was in riches and not in God. There was that in his life which he held more important than God. He had blundered sadly about himself : he did not really want eternal life, for to want eternal life is to want God alone and before all things. So the invitation that he had solicited, he declines. The love of Jesus that he had called out, he disappoints. For it was not only the young man that was sorrowful ; Jesus was sorrowful too. Jesus had called him because he loved him ; the test which he offered was the test of love. The impulse of love is toward sacrifice. The Apostles had left all to follow Jesus. There were holy women following who ministered to him of their substance, who would gladly have given all if he had asked it. But the young man failed where they had succeeded ; and we cannot but feel that the difference was not in the differing amounts of their possessions, but that at the heart of the young man's action was not the impulse of love, but of ambition, of self-seeking. He sought to please Jesus, to make himself important to Jesus ; Jesus was not the passion of his life. He had not the simplicity and selflessness of the Galilean fishermen to whom to be with Jesus was more than all the world. They were content to follow him in any way, even the Way of the Cross.

Consider, second,

All the invitations of Jesus are the expressions of his love; they are invitations to be with him, to be near him. And it is love alone that will enable us to answer. The Way of the Cross that we are invited to, is an impossible way to traverse under the impulse of aught save love. That is why so many find it hard, wearisome, exacting — they are attempting to walk it under other leading than that of love. Those multitudes who are born into the Body of Christ, and one by one fall by the wayside as life goes on, fall because they are not lovers. They had the religion of habit, of inheritance, of duty; but the banner over them was never love. Therefore the Cross weighed and chafed; its constant demands for new sacrifices grew irksome; the vision of what they were losing smote them to self-pity. The day came when they questioned whether they were not paying too great a price for our Lord's favor; whether after all, it was necessary to pay the *whole* world for one's soul: and they threw down the Cross, and left the way and made the great refusal. What has been your case? Our Lord's will that you should follow him has been made known to you. The Cross has been offered. You have heard him saying, Go, sell — perhaps

not earthly possessions, though he says that oftener than we like to think — but some item of your willing, some loved and prized thing, some love that divides your allegiance, some habit that holds you to self-pleasing and self-indulgence. There is the pleading of divine love in our Lord's eyes as he offers the Cross. He is not offering it as a burden — he himself will bear the burden — he is offering it as the means of eternal life. He wants you to see in the Cross, not the Cross in its heaviness, but him in his loveliness. It is not just, "Go, sell"; the invitation does not end there. It is also "Come, take up, follow." Is there any great possession that holds you, and enslaves you, and sends you away sorrowing?

Let us, then, pray,

To answer our Lord's call to Cross-bearing, cheerfully and gladly. Let us pray that the spirit of discipline may so enter into our lives that we shall find his yoke easy and his burden light.

O God the Father, who didst not spare thy only begotten Son, but didst deliver him up for us all; O God the Son who didst die upon the Cross that thou mightest put away sin by the sacrifice of thyself; O God the Eternal Spirit through whom the sacrifice was offered — three Persons and one God — we adore the unspeakable greatness of re-

deeming love. Inasmuch as we are partakers of his death we are called upon to take up his Cross daily. Lord, enable us to deny ourselves, to spend and be spent in thy service. Grant us grace to glorify thy name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Ambition is a word that has rather doubtful associations, but it is from the associations rather than from the thing itself that we shrink. Our Lord recognizes that there is such a thing as spiritual ambition when he sets before us as our ideal the perfection of God. "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." And S. Paul tells us to be ambitious of the best gifts.

The desire to make the most of ourselves and of our opportunities is only another way of expressing that eagerness with which one presses toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus which is the characteristic of the saint.

In a half-formed way such a spiritual ambition is not an uncommon thing. There are many who dream about sanctity. They read the lives of the saints and wonder at their perfectness. They even feel impelled at times to seek some of their more pleasant experiences. The young are given to dreaming of spiritual accomplishment. They think that they are intent on reality until reality

begins to make demands on them for sacrifice, until it develops that the realisation of the dream means the abandonment of self.

It is often difficult to distinguish between dreams and desires until we attempt to translate thought into action. What seems to us to be volition, turns out to be mere velleity. There are many boys who want to enter Holy Orders but few of them ever get so far as a seminary. There are many girls who think it would be wonderful to be a Religious who never reach the novitiate. What happens is that the fascination of this world, when it is revealed, dispels the dream.

There is only one way of finding out whether we are dreaming or willing, and that is the imposition of tests. We rarely impose tests on ourselves, but we do not therefore escape them; God so orders life that it is tested at all points. The sharp winds of reality sweep away the mists of our imaginations. This young man who came to our Lord, came in all sincerity, desiring to be perfect. But he had not understood what being perfect meant, and when our Lord made clear to him the demands that perfectness would make upon him, it was plain to him that he did not desire it. He had desired something he thought perfection, but his notion of perfection was illusion, not reality.

The great test of the reality of the religion of a Christian is found in his willingness to assume the Cross. This is the invitation of our Lord: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me."

There is a good deal of misapprehension about the Cross. I fancy that a good many people mean by the Cross whatever of the disagreeable comes into their lives. If some limitation or suffering or hardship is ours and we can find no way of getting rid of it, we assume a pious look and say, "I am trying to bear my Cross." Now I am far from saying that the hard things that the Providential ordering of life sends us, may not be to us the bearing of the Cross; but I do say that they are not such unless we willingly accept them, and do not try to make capital out of them as a last resource when we find that we cannot get rid of them. Nothing can be a Cross in my life that I am not willing to have.

What needs to be emphasised in regard to the Cross is just this voluntary character of it. It may be a thing *accepted*, but in our Lord's description of it, it is a thing *assumed*. "If any man will come after me, *let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily.*"

We may interpret the Cross as a *voluntary lim-*

itation of life. That is what it meant in our Lord's experience. The Incarnate Life was willingly assumed by our Lord. He suffered pain because he willed the end of his mission and that involved pain. He accepted death on the same terms. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." Even at the last moment the legions of Angels were at hand had he chosen to summon them to his aid. But he took the Cross willingly and bore it to the end.

The Cross must mean the same thing essentially in our experience. If our religion is a reality, we have found that the successful conduct of it limited us in numberless ways. We are called constantly to sacrifice other things that we may have time or means to devote to our religion. As we press deeper into the heart of religion I think we find that there are many otherwise harmless things that we are impelled to give up because they more or less get in the way of the highest conceptions of the spiritual life. We find that even harmless modes of self-indulgence are things to sacrifice rather than things to cling to. The steady contemplation of the Cross impels us to ever-increasing simplification of life. The nails

that fasten us to the Cross are nails that we have drawn out of other things when we detached ourselves from them.

There is of course nothing especially Christian in this process; it is the ordinary process by which all those who desire any end supremely work. What is strictly analogous to the Christian Cross is assumed by the artist or the scientist or the explorer. No one thinks of offering the man sympathy who cuts himself off from what are called the pleasures of life and shuts himself up in a laboratory in the pursuit of some chemical discovery. It is only when one begins to cut himself off from the pleasures of life in order the better to devote himself to the service of a Crucified Master, that one is noticed as doing an unnecessarily hard thing. This attitude of the world toward the Cross is not important; but it is important if we find that the things we have given up for Christ's sake and the Gospel's are leading us to the attitude either of spiritual pride or of self-pity. Cross-bearing should be an utterly natural attitude.

And our acceptance of the Cross of Circumstance should be equally ready. The conditions of the Church to-day are very far from ideal. "Our unhappy divisions" often produce situations which tempt us to impatience and despair.

Denials of fundamental articles of the Faith, refusals to administer the Sacraments, gross ignorance and irreverence, are difficult to bear. But they call for the patient effort for rectification, rather than despair and desertion of the cause of Christ in the Anglican Communion. It must be that spiritual action and devotion to a Crucified Lord will in the end win the triumph of the Catholic Faith. The Cross which is involved in the tolerance of imperfection is one that God is surely calling us to assume. Our work in the Church is the work of forwarding its perfection. We can always make one person more perfect.

Our Lord bore the Cross for others; and there is a certain cross-bearing that is a part of our duty toward the brethren. We are members of a society, and the good of that society comes before our own individual taste or comfort. One of the problems society is struggling with is that of the suppression of the liquor traffic, which from every point of view — social, physical, moral, spiritual — is of colossal dimensions. Surely, if ever there was a question in relation to which the plea for individual liberty was futile and selfish, it is this question. Surely, if ever there was an obvious call to assume a personal limitation for the sake of others it is this.

The Cross, even now, is not all pain. There is

a certain splendor in any sacrifice. That scene of S. Francis stripping himself of all that he had in order that he might give himself completely to our Lord in a life of poverty, is symbolic of much. The Christian ideal of poverty is one not to be lightly set aside. One cannot but feel that it contains a call to great simplicity of living. The sense of irresponsibility for possession is utterly unchristian. Self-indulgence and luxury are not at all consistent with the bearing of the Cross.

The impulse of the primitive Christians to sell all and devote all to the Body contains a truth which is not to be ignored. We need to remember that all that we are and have is our Lord's. By voluntary denials we enter into the life of sacrifice and become sharers in his atoning work. The Christian, like his Master, does not wholly bear the Cross for himself, but embraces others in his sacrifice.

If thou hast squander'd years to grave a gem
Commission'd by thy absent Lord, and while
 'Tis incomplete,
Others will bribe thy needy skill to them —
Dismiss them to the street.

Shouldst thou at last discover Beauty's grove,
At last be panting on the fragrant verge,
 But in the track,

Drunk with divine possession, thou meet love —
Turn, at her bidding, back.

When round thy ship in tempest Hell appears,
And every specter mutters up more dire
To snatch control
And loose to madness thy deep-kennell'd Fears —
Then, to the helm, O Soul!

Last: if upon the cold green-mantling sea
Thou cling, alone with Truth, to the last spar,
Both castaway
And one must perish — let it not be he
Whom thou art sworn to obey!¹

¹ Frederick Herbert Trench.

VII

THE INVITATION TO REST

S. Matthew XI, 28

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Let us picture to ourselves,

OUR Lord, at the close of some day's teaching, gathering about him his chosen disciples for an hour of closer communion with them than was possible at other times. They must have looked forward to such moments of intimacy with eagerness. Then it was that our Lord was accustomed to unfold to them so much of the deeper meaning of his teaching as they were able to bear. Then it was that they were encouraged to ask those questions that the Gospels from time to time report, and which show how much they needed teaching, how little they were as yet able to grasp his meaning. Imagine yourself sitting in the group of the disciples and listening to our Lord. Does it seem a difficult stretch of the

imagination? It need not; practically, that is what you do when you open your Gospel to make a meditation. You are then answering our Lord's invitation to come to him and learn of him. "Learn of me," he says; not learn about me; but learn from me, from my lips, from my words. As you listen to his words you are learning as S. John learned, sitting at the Master's feet and listening to the word of life. It would be in some peasant's house that they would gather; or it may be, in the open, when the light of the setting sun still lingered and delayed the night. Listen to our Lord taking up some question that had arisen during the day and by his questioning drawing out the thought that they had not dared to express, as on that day at Cæsarea Philippi he asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Or answering some difficulty that had arisen in their minds at his teaching, as after the episode of the rich young ruler and our Lord's comment thereon they asked, "Who then can be saved?" Or again, when after his instruction on divorce, they exclaim, "It is good not to marry." We still ask our questions, and our Lord is still here to answer. The earnest study of all his teaching brings about the fulfilment of his promise that his Spirit will lead us and guide us, and that we shall be taught of him. But it is necessary first to know our

Lord in the intimacy of our daily intercourse with him; it is necessary to be united with him, to be in him, and then we shall know the truth as it is in Jesus; then shall we gain that rest that our Lord promises to those who come unto him.

Consider, first,

That in this saying of our Lord there is a revelation of his Deity: Jesus can call us and give us rest because he is God. Others can give in their own measure; but it is the measure of our common humanity. Jesus can give without measure because the resources of his Divinity are without limit. We can only give what we have — kindly counsel, sympathy, love. But we cannot give *rest*; only God can give that. Hence there is a deeper note in God's promises than we find elsewhere. "Surely I will go with thee." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Come unto me all ye that labor." Human helpfulness and sympathy avail by throwing us back on ourselves, teaching us to draw out neglected or forgotten or unsuspected powers, to use our own resources, of which we are for the moment unconscious. They stimulate and invigorate what is there, they do not add anything new. But the Divine sympathy adds something to us; it fills us with the strength

and vigor of the Divine Presence — that Divine Presence which is creative of new strength. Therefore it is that our Lord does not give us maxims,—rules of conduct,—as do the great ethical teachers, but he always presents himself. He does not say when you are in difficulty, think thus and so, or do thus and so; He says, Come unto me. And that does not mean merely the saying of prayers for help, the calling upon him for aid; it means a real coming, a putting of ourselves in his hands, the submission of our wills, the utter surrender of self. Do you understand what it means in the midst of sorrow, distress, difficulty, hardness, disaster, to turn from self, abandon self, give over your own will, and flee to our Lord in eager submission? Any one who has knelt at our Lord's feet and said with all fullness of meaning, "Thy will be done," knows how our Lord comes into the life and sets it at rest. It is not that we find rest because he has relieved us of some trouble, but because he has himself come and we have accepted the trouble as his will. We have found that the union of our will with his will is the revelation of rest. In his will is our peace, Dante said long ago. So we learn our lesson that restlessness is the result of resistance, and that rest and peace are the fruits of submis-

sion and adoration. To come to Jesus is to come away from self.

Consider, second,

Self-reliance which from one point of view is a quality of strength is, from another, a quality of weakness. The self that stands apart from God and relies upon merely human power and wisdom has an inner weakness that in time of crisis will reveal itself — when we most need strength, it will fail us. But the Soul that relies upon our Lord with whom it knows itself to be in union has unfailing and untiring energy. It draws its vigor, not from the broken cisterns of human nature, but from the living fountains of the Divine. To come unto our Lord in the permanent union of our will with his is to have achieved serenity in the face of all troubles. As the child is fearless in the arms of its father, so are we fearless in our Father's arms before all that the world can do unto us. Our trouble is that with us *coming* so often fails to be a permanent state and is but intermittent action. We first act on our own impulsive self-will, and then flee to God to be delivered from the situations that we have ourselves created. The Christian Life can be no such intermittent seeking of our

Lord. His invitation means that we *come and stay*. Rest is not a state that he creates in us apart from himself; it is not some momentary assuagement of pain; what gives rest is his indwelling Presence, and to stray from him is to stray into restlessness. You have found in those hours in which you have fallen victim to the spirit of unrest, when you can neither meditate nor pray, when the presence of the world has become so intense that your very faith seemed to reel, that the solution of the difficulty was to cease from all effort and simply place yourself in our Lord's presence and wait for him; to repress the self-activities to the uttermost and open your soul to the activities of our Lord. That is, you have come unto him when you had let yourself be separated, and found your strength renewed in the quietness and confidence with which you wait for him. You have felt the sense of the Divine Presence stealing over you and the peace of God filling your soul, till the waves of your self-willing died down, as the sea's waves sink to gentle ripples after the storm is past.

Let us, then, pray,

That we may submit our wills utterly to Jesus so as to desire nothing apart from him. Pray

that you may come unto him in all simplicity, bringing him whatsoever burden you may have.

O our God, bestow upon us such rest and peace in thee, that thy will may always be dearer to us than our own will, and thy pleasure than our own pleasure. All that thou givest us is thy free gift to us, all that thou takest away is thy grace to us. Be thou thanked for all; praised for all; loved for all; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It is good, such is our human weakness, to turn from the thought of the Cross to this other invitation, the invitation to rest. And yet we remember that one grows out of the other. Rest belongs to the victors. It comes to those who having valiantly borne the Cross and faithfully followed up Calvary, have entered into the rest that is promised to those who overcome.

Humanity seems to waver between a religion of minimum demands, shaped in accordance with a standard of decency of conduct and social propriety, fit to gain the approval of an easy-going god; and a religion of maximum demands, making life very hard in certain directions. The most clever adaptation of religion to the tastes of humanity has succeeded in effecting a compromise. It teaches that there is a double standard in religion: an easy religion making little demand on life for ordinary folk, and a very hard religion

for those who wish to be saints. There are, it would seem, in the Christian religion many hints and suggestions, which are not obligations, but the following of which results in spiritual enrichment of life. It is within this margin of conduct that God does not require, that sanctity lies.

This seems to me profoundly untrue. I do not believe that there are two standards of conduct. Obligations no doubt differ with differing lives and opportunities; but it cannot be that I am at liberty to decline what in the way of spiritual riches is offered me, on the ground that I do not wish to attempt anything so hard. Our Lord demands of each of us the taking of the Cross. It is through faithful conformity to the life of a crucified Master, that we pass into union with him.

These words of our Lord have brought comfort to untold thousands of souls who have taken him at his word and come to him. We see in imagination the penitents, the mourners of Christendom streaming to our Lord and laying upon him the burden of their grief, the weariness of their sorrows. We, too, have been among them, have we not? We have come with our burden and have found the rest he promised. We know that it is a true word that he has spoken, for we

have verified it again and again. There is always rest with Jesus.

But because his words have this wonderful application and promise, and we have found them so wonderfully fulfilled in our own experience, we must not let this blind us to the fact that the call has a far wider application. It is good to think of the human sorrow that has been assuaged, and the human pain that has been lightened; but let us think farther than that.

I would think of the weariness of a world without our Lord. There is so much of it that lies still in darkness and has not heard of him, or will not listen to the message that comes from him! That means that its labor is fruitless, that it has no vital outlook upon the future. The history of human thought is a depressing thing. It has been attempting through all the centuries to account for the world and life without God and without Christ. It produces endless systems. The proof that they are all unsatisfying is that it still goes on producing new ones. It confesses its failure to reach any conclusion that is stable. Human philosophies are no more than pleasant intellectual exercises. The sentence is: it is labor for that which satisfieth not.

The failure to gain satisfaction through material things is even more striking. The struggle

for the material ends is spiritual impoverishment. What is more pathetic than the end of the successful man of business, the society woman? I am not questioning as to their salvation; what seems to me so horrible is the spiritual ignorance and degradation that so often exists where all that the world can minister has been acquired. To face God with nothing to offer but the full barns as one's sole guarantee of the future is to court the sentence, "thou fool."

Perhaps the most pitiful of all is the struggle of social life. To me the tragic thing is not the mother watching at the bedside of her young daughter, dying of some lingering disease, but the mother watching and guiding her young daughter who is throwing herself with all the power of her opening life into the struggle for social success. We can easily call to mind scenes — a girl or a married woman, surrounded by a group of men, playing all the power of her sex to arouse the sting of theirs. It is a porch, let us say, of a country house on a Sunday morning. The late breakfast is over. The guests fall into groups. It is a question of motoring, of tennis, of golf. There is the flutter of gay clothes, the odor of cigarettes, the flash of eager eyes, the prattle of many voices — and through it all the appeal of the mass-bell from the church near by.

Jesus Christ is being once more lifted, the drama of Calvary is being represented. He has once more come unto his own and his own receive him not. The greater part of the people on the porch there, if you were to ask them, would say at once that they were Christians, were members of the Church, were occasional communicants. That is the tragedy.

Is our Lord a kill-joy, then? Is the accusation true that he takes the light and color out of life? That his religion is antagonistic to all that is bright and beautiful?

No; yet he does kill some things that are reckoned joys. The joys that are aimless expenditure of human energy, which are waste and not construction in life. He claims the undivided allegiance of every life.

It is only on such conditions that he can give much. He cannot produce inner peace and rest for the soul by the manipulation of the environment of life. He can only produce peace and rest by himself possessing the soul and abiding therein. The beggar who knocks at our door and to whom we give alms out of sheer pity, we know is not *relieved*. Rather he is aided in continuing to be the drifting wreck of humanity that he is. There are clamorous beggars at God's door crying for the charity of a "temporary relief."

They fly to him in the hours of darkness for succor that they never asked in the days of their prosperity. It is not in the power of God to do much for such. If we want God, we must come to God and be possessed by him.

We cannot expect rest unless we are willing to make the religion we profess the central interest of our lives. "Come unto me" is the preliminary condition. It is strange that there should be need to say this; strange that there should be need to insist that coming to Christ is not a matter of superficial religious observance. But when one hesitates to repeat it, there arise before him the multitudes of those who at least have not learned the truth, however familiar it may be to them. So one goes on repeating the obvious.

The demands of religion seem hard only to the unconverted, whose wills and affections are still set on this world. To such the demands of Christianity seem preposterous. But once our eyes have been opened to the beauty of divine things, the values of life are readjusted. The center of thought and desire is elsewhere. That one can weigh a social pleasure against a religious duty is the revelation of a certain spiritual poverty. A person who is really in earnest about religion does not feel the pressure.

What the unconverted person looks on as the impossible demands of religion the converted person does not even consider sacrifices. Such is the transforming power of spiritual motive, that sacrifice for our Lord becomes joy.

When we come to our Lord we discover that the restlessness of our life was due to the unspiritual elements in it—to its eagerness for self-indulgence, its schemes for personal gain, its lust for pleasure. Of course our Lord cannot give us rest while we retain this world. The coming to him means the becoming like him; it means the transformation of motive and ideal. The old things have passed away in the very fact of one's coming. Their place has been taken by the new things which are our Lord's revelation of himself. We begin to look for a new heaven and a new earth, and because we are looking for them, we create them.

Love, friendship, possessions—all these are new in Christ.

The ground of rest is satisfied desire. In the life of union all ill desires are avoided, all good desires fulfilled.

Seek no more abroad, say I,
House and Home, but turn thine Eye
Inward, and observe thy Breast;
There alone dwells solid rest.

That's a close immurèd tower
Which can mock all hostile power,
To thyself a tenant be,
And inhabit safe and free.
Say not that this house is small,
Girt up in a narrow wall;
In a cleanly sober mind
Heav'n itself full room doth find.
Th' infinite Creator can
Dwell in it; and may not Man?
Here content make thy abode
With thyself and with thy God.¹

¹ Joseph Beaumont.

VIII

THE INVITATION TO FAITH

S. Matthew XIV, 29

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

Let us picture,

S PETER getting out of the boat to go to Jesus. It is toward morning, and our Lord, who has been spending the night in prayer, is coming to rejoin his disciples. You have been on the water some night after a storm. There was still a slow, sullen wash of the waves, as though they sank back to peace unwillingly. Torn clouds were hurrying across the wind-swept sky. For moments the clouds were torn away from the face of the moon and there was a sudden flash of light on the fretful waters. Picture the disciples looking over the side of the ship and seeing our Lord walking in the moon's path. See them shrink and tremble and cry out — "It is a spirit!" And then hear our Lord's voice

coming over the water—"It is I: be not afraid." How often our Lord has to calm, to hearten, to encourage these timid ones! But there is one among them whose nature it is to pass from depression to self-confidence. There is a certain impulsive boyishness about S. Peter. It is difficult to see any reason for the desire to walk on the water to our Lord except the excitement of it. And the man who had come out of fear to self-confidence, swings back again as he feels the water move and swell and shift and sink under his feet, as, it may be, a cloud was driven over the face of the moon, and Jesus was lost to him in the darkness. Hear S. Peter's voice issuing out of the night: "Lord, save me." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hands, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Let us try to see them coming back to the ship, Jesus leading Peter—Peter, one fancies, once more depressed and discouraged by his failure. It was an awe-struck band that received them into the ship. There was at first an utter silence—a silence unbroken even by the voice of the wind which had suddenly ceased; and then they came and knelt before Jesus "and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." See S. Peter kneeling at Jesus' feet.

Consider, first

That the quality in which S. Peter was deficient was the quality of faith. Faith is self-committal to our Lord that is so complete that it forgets self. S. Peter's character shows as wanting in that steadiness which belongs to an effective faith. He is impulsive, unsteady, and fails in crises, not meeting the unexpected well. In moments of trial he defended himself with the arms of the flesh, not the shield of faith. He undertook to set our Lord right; and when our Lord predicted his sufferings, "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him." At the betrayal he was ready with the sword of the flesh when what was needed was the sword of the Spirit. Later on he pushed himself into a conspicuous place, and then failed in courage to confess our Lord. The quality that drives him to impulsive action and then fails in the crisis, is presumption — faith in self rather than faith in God. He is conspicuously lacking in the quality of humility which is an indispensable element in a true faith. A true faith does not break down in the face of difficulty and trouble because its confidence is not at all in anything that it can do, but in the God in whom it is placed. Trust in our own power is trust in that which is weak and unstable; and though we may manage to ignore this for the moment, and

begin as though we were endowed with all the strength necessary to carry through our undertaking, when the moment of testing comes, the sense of our very limited capacity comes over us and we droop in disheartenment and failure. Yet faith is not faith that God will act for us, but that God will act in us and through us. We do not substitute God's action for ours, but we unite our action with his. Our Lord's reading of S. Peter's character is in this sense; and he made it clear that he would arrive at spiritual strength through his attainment of self-abandonment. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch out thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." The change that must take place in the character of anyone to attain to the life of faith is like this: it passes from the realisation of the impotence of self-assertion and self-reliance to the strength of a life lived in God,—it passes from self-abandonment to self-realisation in the life of union.

Consider, second,

Whether there is a warm and fervent faith at the heart of your religion, giving it energy. We may know whether we have passed beyond formal

religion by the way in which our faith stirs us. Is your faith rousing all your powers — your reason to seek the truth, your affections to embrace the truth, your will to enact the truth. Where there is faith there is a movement of our entire nature toward God: for truth is to us no abstract knowledge, no set of facts, but God himself, revealing himself. Our faith goes out to a Person and rests itself in him; it knits us to God himself. When our Lord says to souls that have sought his aid, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," "thy faith hath saved thee," instead of attributing the healing or the forgiveness that has taken place to the power of his own creative word; what he means is that the surrender of self to him which he perceives at the root of their action in seeking him, has placed them in a state of receptivity, and removed the bar to his action which was present when sin and unbelief were active. Unbelief, which is the active negation of faith, renders his own action impossible. "He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief." Faith operates to the release of the Divine Energy which is always seeking to act in us: it is the throwing open of the shutters of the soul that the vivifying sunlight may stream in — the sunlight which has all the time been shining in the world about us, but could not reach

us. In response to our faith there is a real communication to us of the Divine Power, as the result of which we can do that which unaided we were unable to do. How can faith, we ask, help us to bear suffering, to endure hardness, to sustain the difficulties of life? In what sense can faith solve the intellectual difficulties raised by our thinking? Faith is effective in such emergencies of life because it unites us to God and makes us partakers of the Divine Strength: and because of the illuminating power of the Divine Presence in our souls, we attain the certainty of God's existence and goodness, which makes the questioning of the intellect merely the curious discussion of the details of a problem of which we already have the answer. We are in the position of those who have the answer to a problem in algebra, but are unable to follow the details of the process by which the solution is reached. But having the solution we submit, without too much pain, to our ignorance of algebraic method.

Let us, then, pray,

For the gift of faith: that God will pour into our souls such faith in him that we may endure unshaken all the trials to which that faith may be subjected. Pray for the faith which is utter submission to our Lord.

We beseech thee, O Lord, in thy compassion increase thy faith in us; because thou wilt not deny the aid of thy loving-kindness to those on whom thou bestowest a steadfast belief in thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The demand for faith is the preliminary demand of the spiritual life. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

This is not something exceptional, something peculiar to religion, as though in other departments of life we had knowledge to go on, but in religion had only faith; it is the preliminary demand of *life*. We cannot live save by faith. "He who will not walk by faith, will not walk at all."

Back of the scientific account of the universe lies a great faith — a faith that it is indeed a universe and not a multiverse. It is faith in the order, the consistency, the intelligibility of the course of nature. Without that preliminary assumption or act of faith, scientific investigation would be paralysed. There is nothing that fills one with greater awe than the drift of the "fixed stars," moving in two streams, we are told, in opposite directions. Why? Whence? Whither? We do not *know* but we *believe* that

they belong to a universe that is self-consistent; otherwise, we could not think about them at all. Faith is at the basis of the order of nature as taught by science.

Faith is at the basis of ordered action. It prevents chaos. The man who says that it does not make any difference what you believe, so far as he can, brings chaos. To say that it makes no difference what you believe is to say that it makes no difference what you do, for action is grounded in belief. The man who is indifferent to belief will, if consistent, ultimately become indifferent to character.

But turning to Christian Faith — what calls it out?

Our first faith rests on authority; we are taught. Everyone will find an element of authority in religion as he has received it, no matter how far it may have been superseded by other elements. It is the business of the Christian Church to create this faith by educating those who are under its charge. It is to show them our Lord and lead them to commit themselves to him.

Authority is a word that has a bad sound in modern ears; but it is a little difficult to see how one is to get away from it. There does not seem to be any place in life where we can have

first-hand knowledge of all the subjects that we are obliged to deal with. With the increasing complexity of life, the expert becomes more and more necessary. At the outset of any education authority steps in to show us the way. There will always be the need of authority where we have not acquired first hand knowledge. And in matters of revealed religion, therefore, authority must remain a permanent need. We can hardly expect God to repeat his revelation to each of us; it is enough that it has provided for it authoritative transmission.

But the greater part of the religion that is authoritatively taught can be later verified in experience. It is the business of faith to lead us on to experience, just as S. John Baptist led his disciples on from belief in his word about Christ to personal knowledge of Christ. The passage from faith to experience is, indeed, the main work of the spiritual life. It takes the material given by authority, and, assimilating it by faith, transmutes it into experience.

I would emphasise this quality of personal experience as the end to which faith is leading us. Faith is not for itself; it ceases when its work is accomplished. Therefore it cannot be mere otiose assent to truths that are taught. There is a certain driving power in faith that makes

it accomplish its ends. What is meant by believing the Church? Not, surely a lazy assent to what the Church teaches, not the substitution of the faith of the Church for our own faith, leaving ourselves without any obligation! Believing the Church is so believing its teaching that one is driven to the application of it to life.

I want to make it very clear that mere assent is not true faith. No one can be said to believe what the Church teaches about fasting in the sense of having faith in that teaching, who never fasts. No one has faith in the teaching of the Church as to absolution, who does not seek absolution.

Ultimately, Christian faith is faith in a person to whom one surrenders oneself. Christian faith is faith in Christ; which is not belief that Christ lived and set an example and so on, but self-surrender to Christ who now lives and makes demands on our lives for allegiance. Christ is the foundation. I find certain needs in my nature which that nature cannot satisfy. Christ is here and offers himself and satisfies the need.

Faith is not an isolated quality. We have to isolate when we are describing or discussing, but the isolation is in our mind not in the fact. Faith cannot exist without the other virtues.

"Now abideth these three; faith, hope and charity."

Failure of faith involves doubt of Christ. It is usually found to grow out of looking away from him. S. Peter thought of himself and of the water; if he had thought only of our Lord he would not have begun to sink. That is what happens to us, is it not? We feel our faith declining. We say: "I do not seem to have the same faith that I had years ago." If we examine ourselves we shall usually find that we have not the same devotion to our Lord as we had years ago. Other things have taken the place that he once held in our lives. So we begin to sink. God grant that before we sink too deep we lift our eyes and cry, "Lord, save us; we perish."

Firmness of faith demands continual vision of our Lord. The eye of the soul must be always fixed on him. If we permit the vision to become clouded by sin, we shall find our desire for our Lord growing weak. We shall not want to go to him upon the water. We must beware of the presumption that exposes faith to influences that will cloud or kill it. We may think that our faith will bear any amount of strain; but we have no right to expose it needlessly. Surely, a

Christian is bound to exercise some care as to the books he reads and the company he keeps. Not that faith requires ignorance. There is great need of instructed faith. People fall a prey to unbelief or misbelief, not because there is anything conclusive in the claims that are made, but because they are unprepared to meet them. The romances of the old travellers which told that in the Arctic regions certain eggs grew on trees which falling into the water broke and released wild geese, were accepted because there was no way of checking them up. It is so with the tales of those who report the wonderful peace and unity of the Roman Church. The romance of the Papacy has as little foundation in the Bible or Church history as the romances of the Ring. But you have to know the Bible and Church history to be able to say so.

I have no use for a "cloistered faith." Faith must be able to bear the wear and tear of the every day life.

Faith is not founded on miracles or belief in them. Miracles are a trial of faith. Faith cannot be founded on exceptions in religion any more than in nature. Faith is based on the uniformity of the divine action, the conviction that God is consistent. If he is not consistent, we cannot have faith in him. The Bible phrase is: "God

is faithful." The fact of this consistency is demonstrated out of our spiritual experience. We find the faithfulness of God in our own life-experience, and this not solely in the external action of God, so to call it, but in the response he makes to spiritual effort.

The capacity of the life of faith is indefinite. If one really believes there can be no limit set to what one can do. That is the meaning of our Lord's energetic utterances about faith. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed—"

"Thy faith," he says again and again, "hath healed thee, saved thee." This indicates its capacity to identify itself with God. Healing, saving, is really the result of the influx of the divine in response to the energetic action of faith.

Faith grows as we rest in it.

I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man that thou mayst meet
In lane, highway, or open street —

That he, and we, and all men, move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above:

That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all are shadows vain;
That death itself shall not remain:

That weary deserts we may tread,
 A dreary labyrinth may thread,
 Through dark ways underground be led :

Yet, if we will one Guide obey,
 The dreariest path, the darkest way,
 Shall issue out in heavenly day.

And we, on divers shores now cast,
 Shall meet, our perilous voyage past,
 All in our Father's house at last.

And ere thou leave him, say thou this,
 Yet one word more : they only miss
 The winning of that final bliss —

Who will not count it true that Love,
 Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
 And that in it we live and move.

And one thing further make him know —
 That to believe these things are so,
 This firm faith never to forego —

Despite of all that seems at strife
 With blessing, all with curses rife —
 That this *is* blessing, this *is* life.¹

¹ Richard Chenevix Trench.

IX

THE INVITATION TO DELIVERANCE

S. John XI, 43

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Lazarus, come forth.

Let us picture,

LAZARUS standing at the opening of the tomb, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Imagine the bewilderment of the man, called thus from the other side of death — called out of what scenes we cannot imagine, called back to take up the routine of his old life. We cannot think of him as coming back other than regretfully, as one upon whom there was laid a new period of service, a new time of probation. He stands there on the margin of two worlds, as yet hardly knowing to which of them he belongs. In contrast, see the astonishment of the sisters as they see the loved brother emerging from the tomb which they thought had received him forever — an astonishment that passes

quickly into joy. What is a great gift of our Lord's love to their love, is a great demand upon the love of Lazarus. But both the gift and the demand are more than personal: it is a great gift of our Lord's love to us, it is a demonstration of his power over the grave and death. No doubt, without this and the other miracles of recall from death which he worked we should still believe in him utterly, but it is a strong support to our faith that he thus manifests the sweep of his power, the absolute authority that is his over life and death. It was this far-reaching result of his act that was in our Lord's mind when he exerted his power. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Our Lord does nothing impulsively; the permanent effects of his action are always in his mind — the people that stand by, yes; and those who read till the end of time. That crowd of hesitant and half-believing Jews, drawn hither by curiosity, by some sympathy with the sisters, perhaps; they are the representatives of the world which from generation to generation was to read of this miracle, and learn from it the mastery of Incarnate God over the destiny of man. See them awe-struck, and for the moment, at any

rate, believing, all their doubts stilled by what they see.

Consider, first,

That the supreme power of our Lord is manifested in his triumph over death: here in the resurrection of Lazarus, as again in the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain, but more completely and finally in his own resurrection. Death is the last enemy before whom all men had trembled and before whom most men tremble still. Death still appears so hopeless, so final, so disastrous; it seems so to defeat all our aspirations and works! Though men's hope in the face of it has proved indestructible, they could never meet it without a lingering fear. But here is the triumphant proof that there is One mightier than death, here is the demonstration that death is but an incident in our immortality, and from henceforth death is swallowed up in victory. If the resurrection of Christ had stood by itself, we might have been in doubt as to our own relation to that resurrection; but as we stand by the grave of Lazarus we have no doubt that our Lord's resurrection involves our own. As in the years to come men brooded over the meaning of this triumphant life — this life of God which had as-

sumed to itself human life,—it became plain that our Lord's assumption of humanity was permanent, and involved, too, the preservation of all humanity so far as it was united to him. It means that those who live in him, live in him forever; that those who die in the Lord are forever blessed. Men passed beyond the belief in the survival of death by the human soul to the conviction of a conscious immortality in the presence of God. All who mourn become as Mary and Martha, awakened from the overpowering sense of loss to receive back at our Lord's hands the life that had seemed to pass from them irreparably — only to receive it back, not as Mary and Martha to be resurrendered to death, but — to receive it back as laid up treasure that through the passing years would more and more draw their hearts after it. Death to those who are in our Lord is not the breaking of bonds, but the knitting of new ones that cannot be broken.

Consider, second,

That our Lord's summons to Lazarus to come forth from the grasp of death is a summons to all men to break away from all that implicates death, to live in him the free life of the resurrection that he has conquered for them. It is not that death will be, but that death is now,

swallowed up in victory. Risen with Christ is not a possibility and a distant hope, but a present fact. The life that we now live as Christians, is the risen life. We are caught up by the power of his resurrection to live with him in heavenly places. "If ye then be risen with Christ"—the *if* does not imply doubt of the *life*, but doubt of the individual's having laid hold upon it. The deliverance wrought in the Christian is a real passing from death unto life—a real emergence into a new state of being. The power of death, and of sin, which death symbolises, is broken for all men who will receive the great deliverance, and they are endowed with the liberty of God's children. We feel from time to time the guilt of sin, and, oppressed by its burden, we seek pardon and release through a sincere repentance. But there is a release, would we only claim it, that is greater than that, precious as that is, and that is release from the *power* of sin. It is one of the marks of a growing Christian life that the power of sin wanes. We find ourselves less and less attracted by what it has to offer, less interested in its displayed attractions. We wonder what it was that we found desirable in its allurements. We come to smile at temptations which it once took all, or more than all the strength of our nature to resist. There grows within our

souls a sense of power which is the measure of our appropriation of the grace of God. The voice of our Lord increases in clearness and attractiveness, and the grave-clothes wherewith we were bound unwind and fall away, and we stand forth, God's risen ones, feeling the throb of the new life in our veins, ready to take up the new mission to which we are called. You have experienced, have you not, that death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness, that sense of having passed from death unto life, that sense of power to meet victoriously the sins that once beset you? It is no doubt true that this or that sin still has power of appeal, or, perhaps, through habituation, still has the mastery of your will; but that is only the clinging of the old life out of which you are passing,—the struggle of the old habit that is dying, the lingering in a tomb already flooded with the light of your resurrection, reverberating with the voice of our Lord's summons in the truth of which you as yet dare not utterly believe.

Let us, then, pray,

For faith in the deliverance that Christ has wrought for us. Pray to rise utterly from the life of sin to the life of righteousness. Pray for grace to shake off the still clinging grave clothes.

O God, who, to show forth the wonders of thy Majesty didst, after thy Resurrection from the dead ascend into heaven, grant us the aid of thy loving-kindness; that according to thy promise thou mayest ever dwell with us on earth, and we with thee in heaven; where with the Father and the Holy Spirit thou art ever one God, world without end.

The Incarnation was a mission of deliverance. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

This power was manifested and symbolised by our Lord's miracles by which he actually delivered men from devils, from disease, from death. By his teaching he delivered them from ignorance.

He exerts the same power now through his Church. I do not think that the power which our Lord gave to his Apostles and which they exercised in the healing of disease and other acts which we call miraculous, died with them. Indeed for some time in the history of the Church

"miracles" were of frequent occurrence. They ceased when Christians ceased to believe them possible. Where men have the requisite faith they are still possible. There are many instances of healing through Holy Unction wherever that Sacrament is administered.

But it has been, no doubt, the part of wisdom not to stress such endowments of the Body as the gift of healing, as there would have been danger of turning attention away from what is the chief function of the Church in working out its mission for the deliverance of men. The deliverance which the Gospel promises is the renewal of the world and human society through the coming of the spiritual man. Its pains and troubles can be alleviated by isolated acts of deliverance, but it can only be set free through its entire conformity to the will of our Lord. The creation of spiritual humanity is the present work of the Church, and the coming of the Kingdom of God waits on its success.

It is no doubt true that the present outlook for the coming of the Kingdom is not encouraging. That is to say, the end is not in sight. But we ought to be encouraged if we are making progress. When we remember the immense slowness with which humanity moves, the ages that it takes to acquire any permanent step in ad-

vance, we may be very much encouraged when we see that progress is being made in any respect. And surely we can see that that is true. The power of the Gospel does work in and through the Church and outside of the Church.

Our constant failure is the failure to contribute our portion to the work of progress. The work of progress is the work of the Body of Christ, but the Body works through the individual members of it. Our failure to contribute our part of the work, means that the work is maimed and delayed. Life originates in the Head and is transmitted to the members as energizing power; but unfortunately any member may decline to become the instrument of the power, and instead of utilising it, suppress it.

That is one of the greatest calamities in the life of the Church — the suppression of power. There are so many members of the Church who are mere sponges, taking in all they can, and giving out nothing. There is nothing more heart-breaking than the fact that by far the greater part of the energy of the Church, which should be spent on the conversion of the world, is actually consumed in the attempt to induce the members of the Church to do their duty as Christians.

This power of deliverance, which is in fact, the presence of Christ in his Church, is able to

overcome even death. The miracle of the raising of Lazarus was simply one expression of the power of life which is in our Lord. It is the same power which brings us into life, which keeps us living. It can restore us to life. That, of course, is an awkward phrase: Lazarus had not ceased to live, nor shall we. The union of soul and body which is broken in what we call death, will ultimately be reconstituted. Death has lost any reality worth considering for those who are in Christ. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

That power of Incarnate Christ is working in us all the time. It is the power that enables us to overcome the sinful inclinations that we find in ourselves. The push of the passions and appetites is urging us toward sin continually until we have overcome by the power of the indwelling Christ. We cannot pull sin out by force of the will; it is pushed out by the presence of our Lord in the soul.

Temptation is a phenomenon of unstable equilibrium. It is possible because the will is not yet fixed. We are drawn this way and that because we have not yet utterly decided in which way we will go. When we completely decide then we at-

tain peace, either the peace of God in Christ, or the peace of death in the surrender to sin.

In the meantime the conscience is the index of an unstable state. So long as we feel the stress of the conscience we may be sure that we have not really decided all the questions which life asks us. Of course, we never attain entire stability in this world. We attain stability in certain regions and in regard to certain questions, but for most of us, at any rate, there still remain questions that are not wholly decided, problems of life which are not completely solved. But if we have at all succeeded we have done so because we have achieved a state of union with our Lord. As this state deepens through the surrender of our wills to him, and through the seeking of his mind as the guide of our life, we find the stress of temptation lessens.

One of our mistakes is to stop short of this entire union with Christ. We are often content to deal with the *guilt* of sin, and stop there. This comes out in those confessions which month after month are practically the same. Life seems in such cases an endless round of the repetition of the same petty sins. The trouble — or at least one trouble — is that we have never got beyond estimating sin in terms of guilt, and therefore are content with seeking forgiveness. But the

offer of our Lord is not simply to free us from the guilt of sin, but to free us from its *power*. Until the power of sin over us is broken, little is done toward the sanctification of life.

This deliverance from the power of sin ought to mean among other things the deliverance from low and unworthy ideals. Some one has pointed out that there are a great many Christians who are content with a very modest competence in the matter of spiritual acquisition. We can in no way get on but through the possession of ideals of life which spur us to greater activity. In other words, we can not get on unless we think it immensely worth while to get on.

It is a sense of the value of the spiritual life which sets us to the diligent dealing with those minor faults of character which are the dead flies that spoil the apothecary's ointment. Until we appreciate how completely the growth in holiness is conditioned by wise dealing, and persistent dealing, with very minor matters of conduct, we are not likely to be the wise money-changers that our Lord desired.

Our habits are the index as to how the work of our Lord in us is succeeding; for our habits are only the externalization of the union wrought by our Lord through his Spirit. It is the process of what S. Paul calls edification; and where we

observe a life which is not acquiring spiritual habits we infer that the work of edification is not going on successfully.

The powers of our nature, brought under the will of our Lord and the influence of his Spirit, become free in the true sense of that much abused word, freedom. They are freed for action. They have acquired the true liberty of the children of God. What we need is liberty *to be* the child of God, which we cannot be so long as we are subject to sin. While we are subject to sin our powers are, as it were, mortgaged; it is the coming of the Spirit into life that set us free.

Liberty is freedom from desire. It is what we call the life of detachment. We need to consider, steadily, whether there are not more desires from which we might be freed. Life tends to entangle us more and more in its meshes.

But at least we should have inner freedom.

View me, Lord, a work of Thine:
 Shall I then lie drowned in night?
 Might Thy grace in me but shine,
 I should seem made all of light.

But my soul still surfeits so
 On the poisoned baits of sin,
 That I strange and ugly grow,
 All is dark and foul within.

Cleanse me, Lord, that I may kneel
At Thine Altar, pure and white:
They that once Thy mercies feel,
Gaze no more on earth's delight.

Worldly joys, like shadows, fade
When the heavenly light appears;
But the covenants Thou hast made,
Endless, know nor days nor years.

In Thy word, Lord, is my trust,
To Thy mercies fast I fly;
Though I am but clay and dust,
Yet Thy grace can lift me high.¹

¹ Thomas Campion.

X

THE INVITATION REFUSED

S. John V, 39, 40

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Let us picture,

OUR Lord speaking to these unbelieving Jews who have been only hardened against him by the miracle he has just wrought on the impotent man. We feel back of our Lord's words the sense of the obstinate opposition that met him in his attempt to unveil to men the Father. "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," he had said to the sufferer; and nothing but extreme malice could have thought at such a time of objecting that it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath day. Our Lord's defence was, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." But the

result was that the "Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Try to see our Lord talking with these men, trying to bring the nature of his mission and his relation to the Father, whom they called their God, home to them. There are few passages of more wondrous depth in all the wonderful Gospel of S. John, than this in which our Lord speaks of his sending by the Father and his bringing to men of the gift of eternal life. We would think that the splendor of the teaching would have imposed silence and awe on the hearers. After all these centuries one finds it impossible to read the report of our Lord's words unmoved. He is exposing the very heart of his mission, he is speaking words that uncover the very depths of the action of God toward us. It is as though we had heretofore caught glimpses of the meaning of God's action and purpose through our Lord's words and works, but now the full light of revelation streams upon it, showing us the marvel of the divine love. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." But it is all in vain that our Lord bares his heart;

they will not listen; they are so blinded by prejudice that they cannot even understand their own Scriptures. "They are they which tell of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Try to see our Lord becoming silent and turning away, with a sense of his failure.

Consider, first,

That the primal difficulty was that these Jews thought that they knew. They were not in the usual sense, bad men; they were men whose minds were utterly preoccupied by the conviction that their own knowledge of religion was final. They were religious men; but they had grasped the teaching of their religion partially and one-sidedly. They had left themselves no chance for religious growth. To them a religion that was by its whole teaching temporary and forward-looking, had become fixed and backward-looking. This attitude blinded their eyes to its true meaning. They should have been alert to meet the fulfilment of the promises of God by the fathers; they should have been awake to the possibilities of our Lord; but they were fixed immovably in their prejudices. Therefore our Lord's appeal to their own Scriptures was vain. They had arrived at an interpretation which excluded him. The trivial interpretation of the

Sabbath law that they had imposed on the teaching of the Old Testament, made our Lord a lawless person who was not to be listened to. His kindliness and readiness to relieve suffering, were to them revelations of an irreverent mind. His claim to be the immediate representative of God was blasphemy. To such minds truth is never true on its own merits; it is only true if it fits into a preconceived system. Its lack of harmony with what they suppose to be truth is its condemnation. Therefore there can be no advance in such a religion — it is fixed and dead. Our Lord's assertion of power and authority only render him the more suspect. It is startling to find that our Lord was only successful in his preaching when he turned away from *good* men and preached to bad. "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed." These were the "common people" who heard our Lord "gladly."

Consider, second,

That we probably miss much of what might come of our religion through the assumption that we already are sufficiently instructed in it. It is, no doubt, true that the Christian Religion is final in a sense that the Jewish religion was not; it is never final in the sense that we have personally sufficiently understood it, or made suf-

ficient application of it. We are in the same sort of danger the Jews were in of sinking into a state of spiritual immobility, impervious to further appeals. The relations of God to man are too complex, the purposes of the divine love for us are too rich, to admit of their ever being exhausted. One fancies that one of the surprises of the future will be the revealing of how little we have made of our opportunities, how little fruit we have reaped of the seed of the Gospel sown in our lives. We shall wake after death to the realization of how much remains to be done before we are in a state to see God. This will be one side of our purgation. In the meantime it behooves us to consider how far we are making use of the opportunities that we do see, and how far, with what energy, we are trying to see more. Is it true of us that the Holy Scriptures are a dead letter, rather than a source of living water out of which we are constantly drawing for the refreshment of our souls? Is it true that they tell of Christ and his will for us in manifold ways that we have not yet appreciated? From those pages our Lord calls and beckons to us. I doubt if ever anyone meditates through a chapter of the New Testament without the sense of new discoveries. Old phrases get new meanings and the familiar is charged with novelty.

The effect of them is that they send us to our Lord with a more personal apprehension of him as our Saviour and Guide. We discover in him deeper sources of spiritual life. We cannot for a moment imagine that all the secrets of the spiritual life are known to us, that we sufficiently know him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Are you deep students of those hidden treasures? Do the years as they pass find you possessed of deeper experience of the life that is hid in God with him? It is so difficult to master the elements of spiritual living, to detach ourselves ever so little from the world to live in him, that one cannot but feel the urgency of the spiritual problem. One looks over the garden where a few plants struggle into pale bloom amid a mass of encumbering weeds, and sees the picture of one's own spiritual life. We feed out of the richness of our lives so much that is at best useless and have left over so little energy for the fruits of the Spirit. "And ye will not come unto me!" How sad it is!

Let us then, pray,

That we may come to our Lord more fully.
Pray that his Eternal Life may be manifested in us with power.

O God, the Enlightener and Life of believers,

we beseech thee that thou wouldst endue us with the gift of thine Only-begotten Son, and the ineffable blessing, and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, that we may love thee without lukewarmness, and confess thy faith in love, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The charge of the Jews against our Lord was twofold: I. That he was a breaker of the Law. II. That he was a blasphemer. It does not seem the function of a meditation to deal with these in any detail. Our Lord's defence was the assertion of his authority as one sent by the Father.

What concerns our purpose is that our Lord in his defence went farther than was at all necessary for his immediate purpose, and asserted his possession of life, eternal life; and that he is the immediate source of life to men.

It is the meaning of the Christian Revelation that through our Lord we participate in the divine life of God. We need to be very clear that the Christian life is not just one more system of conduct. It is the manifestation of a divine life. In Christ are "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Our Lord asserts that if the Jews had paid proper attention to their own Scriptures they

would not have set themselves against him and his mission. It is true that God had revealed himself to them, but his revealing purpose did not end with that revelation. Privilege should have led them to seek further knowledge of God; but in fact it had produced in them a pride and self-satisfaction that blocked the way to the recognition of God's work in Christ. The abuse of God's gifts had led to spiritual blindness. "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

The Revelation of God, had they properly understood it, would have sent them to our Lord. They would have recognised his Messiahship. As they listened to Christ's teaching and saw his mighty works, they should have seen in them the fulfilment of the prophecies. "They are they which testify of me."

The closed mind blocks all advancement. There is nothing so paralysing as self-satisfaction. When we reach the place where we are satisfied with ourselves and our accomplishment, then there is no more to be done. But we long for the comfort of satisfaction, for the contentment of an undisturbed mind. We dislike to have questions thrust on us for solution. The

average Christian likes to have his religion dealt out to him in capsules and to feel that nothing more is required of him than to swallow them! But contented comfort is always a dangerous thing. There is such a thing as a divine discontent. And it is just as dangerous to be comfortable mentally as it is physically.

Religion necessarily makes constant intellectual demands on one. It is so wonderful a thing, this account of our relation to God our Saviour, that we cannot hope ever to exhaust it either as knowledge or experience. But if we have not exhausted it we are bound to strain every nerve to assimilate so much of it as we can. The Christian life is a steady effort to know God more and better.

Our Lord in this conversation with the Jews is speaking of the Old Testament, but what he says applies equally to the New Testament. The Bible is one means by which God reveals himself.

The Revelation of God made in our Lord and recorded in the Holy Scriptures is inexhaustible. Neither the Church nor the individual can at any time say: "I understand all." New circumstances in the life of the Church or of the individual bring out new aspects and applications

of truth. Our mental inertia is such that we rarely think our way deeply into a truth until we have to use it.

It was when one or another truth about our Lord was denied that the Church set itself to thinking out connectedly the truths it had received about him, and stated them formally in the Creeds. It is when to-day some truth is attacked that we set ourselves to ascertain just what it means. It is when we have to face some new temptation that we are at pains to find what the mind of the Church is about the sin we are in danger of committing.

We need to feel the importance of a competent knowledge of the Bible, especially of the New Testament. It is easy to say, I am not a scholar and cannot be expected to know about such things. Anyone must be expected to know about the things which concern his eternal life. We have read a good deal about the Scriptures being kept from the people during the Middle Ages. If the people in the Middle Ages were at all like the people of the Twentieth Century no one had to work very hard to keep the Scriptures from them.

There are those who have a vague notion that something called "criticism" has rendered the Bible untrustworthy — that we cannot use it with

the same confidence as our fathers did. No doubt modern criticism of the Scriptures has done a good deal to change some of our notions about them; but I do not know of any certain result of criticism which at all weakens my belief in the Bible as the means of God's revelation of himself. On the other hand, criticism has done much to make the Bible for me the book of a living experience, which opens to me the mind of God.

And as to the New Testament Scriptures: the more one studies them, the clearer is the vision of our Lord. They have no life in themselves; they lead one to our Lord, the source of our life. There is a reading of Scripture which has for its end the knowing about our Lord. That is not enough. We need more than to know about him; we need to know him. We need after we have read his word to put it into practice. If we read, Blessed are the humble and meek, we need to become meek, or else we are as the Jews. If we read that he promises forgiveness of sins, we need to go and seek that forgiveness as he has appointed. It was his condemnation of certain that they say and do not. Let us not be as they. There are all sorts of uses of the Scriptures that are legitimate. But speaking from the point of view of practical religion any way is an incom-

plete way that does not lead us to a deeper personal religion. Our religion must not be like a man setting out on a journey and then turning back; or, finding a place that satisfies him, and settling there. Our life is a journey to God, and there is no place to stop short of the unveiled Presence of the Beatific Vision.

One chief function of the Scriptures is to stimulate in us desire, as we go on our way; to stimulate it by keeping before us the life of our Lord as the guide of our lives.

There is something pathetic in our Lord's words: "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." One of the chief disasters of the Protestant Reformation was the minimising of our part in the work of Salvation. It is, of course, true that salvation is of God and that we are not saved by anything that we do; but that does not mean that we are wholly passive in the work of salvation. God does not save us without our coöperation. He cleanses and vivifies our powers, but, they being so cleansed and vivified, he expects us to use them. We are to repent, and he accepts our repentance; and then we are to bring forth works meet for repentance. Back of all is his Presence, what we call his grace; but through all is also our response to him.

So it is in this matter of *knowing*. There are a great many who know about God — and are content to stop there. The Christian needs to know. To know anyone is to have some personal experience of him. It is thus that we know God in Christ, through personal experience. The Incarnate action of our Lord has made it possible for us to be so united to him that we may know him. We know him in his action on our lives, in his response to our prayers, in his self-impartation in the Holy Communion. We experience his Presence as we lift our souls to him and speak with him. He is a God at hand, we find, and not a God afar off.

If this is not true of us, if we have no sense of the divine Presence, if God remains a theory and not an experience, we need at once to find what there is in our lives that is impeding his self-manifestation. It may be indulged sin. It may be something we have not called sin — indifference, sloth or the like; whatever it is, let it be rooted out.

No other voice than Thine has ever spoken,

O Lord, to me —

No other words but thine the stillness broken

Of life's lone sea.

There openeth the spirit's silent chamber

No other hand —

No other lips can speak the language tender,
Speech of the Fatherland.
For others speak to one the eye beholdeth,
Who veils the soul within —
Some know not all the joy, and all the sorrow,
And none know all the sin.
They speak to one they love, it may be blindly,
Or hate, as it may be.
They speak but to the shadow, the illusion;
Thou speakest, Lord, to me.
It is unto the sheep the shepherd calleth,
His voice they know,
No voice beside can lead them to the pastures
Where fountains flow.
No other tells unto my soul the secret,
The mystery divine —
The love that maketh glad the inner chambers,
His home and mine.
And therefore, O my God, with full assurance,
I hear, and I rejoice;
The Heart of Christ, beyond men's thoughts and
dreamings,
Told in His voice.

XI

THE INVITATION TO FORGIVENESS

S. Matthew V, 24

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Let us picture,

ONE standing in indecision before the altar, with his gift in his hand ready to offer. At the very moment of approach there has risen before his mind the image of the injured brother. It is as though a curtain had been drawn aside and a picture displayed on the field of his memory. He sees some incident in his own past — sees acts being done, hears words being spoken, and realises that he has built up a wall of offense between himself and his brother. A temptation presents itself to think of the doings or sayings

of the brother; but no, it is not the brother's act that is in judgment, it is his own act. The brother has something against him — something clear, precise, definite, which is the result of his own doing or saying. And it takes the gift out of his hand, and turns his steps back from the altar, and sends him out to seek his brother. The thing that he had thought of as not of very much importance, as a mere breaking of harmonious relations between himself and the brother for a time, reveals itself as a barrier between his soul and God. God is not indifferent to our relations to one another. Indeed, the basis of our brotherhood is in him. Brotherhood is no longer a merely human relation: a higher relation has come into existence through the Incarnation, between those who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The brother is now the brother for whom Christ died; the brother who has been baptized with the one baptism into the one Body, and been made, as we, a member of the one Lord. The divisions that seem merely human quarrels, are rents in the body of Christ. Let us turn back to our vision of the altar, and see the one who is reconciled to the brother hurrying back to resume his gift and to offer it with an appeased conscience and a joyful heart.

Consider first,

How deeply the law of forgiveness is embedded in the Gospel. "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him," S. Peter asked. Seven times seemed to him the conceivable limit; but it was negated by our Lord's assurance that the only limit is the repentance of the brother. There is no point at which we can refuse forgiveness. But here, in our Lord's sermon on the mount the emphasis is changed from the duty to forgive, to the duty to seek forgiveness. "If thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee." It points to a spiritual state which has been created that is displeasing to God. And it points to this: that we cannot excuse our spiritual state by the spiritual state of the brother; we are bound to set ourselves right in the sight of God. We are bound to remove all bars of our own erecting. And the impulse to do this is to be sought in the action of God. God is not simply ready to forgive if we ask him; but he seeks to forgive. He presses about us with his grace and favor, so that it is only through obstinate resistance that we can escape forgiveness. He does not wait for any movement on our part; he comes and offers himself. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God's at-

itude is not that of passive waiting for us to come to him; he urges himself upon us. He sacrifices himself to his own love; he goes up on a Cross that he may attract us. Try to realise the divine hopefulness that is displayed in the Cross. "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." Try to see the world as a world of ignorant, sinful, indifferent souls about which the divine pity is surging, seeking for entrance and acceptance. Try to understand the thirst of God which can only be satisfied by the opportunity to forgive sins. And see this action of God participated in by saints and angels who associate themselves with his work, and by their prayers and labors seek to forward it. Try to understand the deep meaning of that saying: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Picture to yourself the joy that runs through heaven whenever there is made a first confession. Have you ever so filled heaven with joy?

Consider, second,

In contrast with all this, the meagerness and grudgingness of our forgiveness. We hardly forgive, if one comes and seeks us; we have great difficulty in seeking forgiveness for ourselves. We say with immense difficulty, "I was wrong."

We have strange sayings about "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." But God says, Thy sins and iniquities I will remember no more. God forbids us to call up before him in any doubt the sins we have confessed and been forgiven. God even forgives the sins we forget, if so be we show a good will. God in his mercy has established the means of forgiveness; and yet we find it so difficult to make our confessions! And is not this true: That the Brother whom we remember to have offended as we prepare to draw near to the altar, is most often our Elder Brother? And what can it mean to go and be reconciled to him, but to seek his forgiveness in the very way that he has provided for the remission of sin — to seek the cleansing of our souls in the application of the Most Precious Blood in the Sacrament of Penance? Consider your own state toward our Lord. Have there not been manifold offences for which you ought to seek reconciliation from him? Is it generous, is it loving, is it grateful, not to come to the sacrament that he has provided? The Brother who died that you might be forgiven — does he not deserve better at your hands? Let us put aside for the moment any other aspect of sin than its ingratitude. It is an act of ingratitude toward the Lord who died. How then ought you to act? The brother

seeks reconciliation for the sin that you committed! That, surely, is a wondrous thing.

Let us, then, pray,

That we may deeply realise our own need of forgiveness, and through that learn readiness to forgive. Let us pray that all traces of resentment against wrong may be banished from our minds.

O Lord, we beseech thee, absolve thy people from their offences; that through thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Blessed Lord and Saviour.

We recognise our own sinfulness and seek the pardon of God. There is no one who would deny that he is a sinner. There are, to be sure, people who think that they are not very bad, as they say; there are even people who do not like to say in the general confession that they are "miserable sinners"; but even such would hardly deny the existence of some sin, or claim perfection. We are all sinners.

There is a like universality in God's offers to pardon. Pardon is for all; all, that is, who want it. God requires of us unlimited willingness to forgive. Our Lord's words to S. Peter are the expression of that. But the unlimited forgive-

ness that he expects us to exercise toward those who have offended us, is the forgiveness he is ready to exercise toward those who offend him.

We, of course, can decline forgiveness. We can ignore God's pleading with us to be reconciled to him. We can block forgiveness by spiritual unfitness. But it remains that God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his sin and be saved.

The importance of this is shown by the way in which it is stressed by our Lord — he returns to the subject again and again.

It is in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Imagine yourself saying this prayer while you are unforgiving!

It is brought out in the parable of the Unforgiving Debtor. Imagine yourself seeking the forgiveness of God and then going forth and taking your brother by the throat and saying: "Pay me that thou owest!"

It comes out in these words of the Sermon on the Mount: "If thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee." If we have anything against the brother, it is enough that we be ready to forgive when he wants forgiveness; but if he has aught against us, we must seek forgiveness.

There is an obligation to do our uttermost to live in love and charity with all men. That means an active attempt on our part. It is not just trying to avoid trouble, but an attempt to be peace-makers. "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men."

There is no more common form of sinfulness than sins against charity. The uncharitable spirit, which is always sitting in judgment on others. Examine yourself as to whether you are wont to attribute motives to people; whether you are afflicted with that most vile form of conceit that thinks it can read people's faces and know what they are thinking. Are you touchy, over-sensitive, critical, envious?

We feel an injury easily when it is done to us; but the sense of wrong is difficult to discern *when it is our wrong*, when we are the offenders. We find it hard to acknowledge a wrong; that is apt to be a defect in our penitence. We may test our sincerity easily by noticing whether we are willing to make whatever restitution is called for by the circumstances. We may think that we are penitent because we are willing to acknowledge our sin to God; but an injury to another may call for restitution. Perhaps there is a thought here for those who "make their confessions to God," and do not care to make them to a priest.

One of the commonest forms of offence against the brother is *gossip*. It is terrible to think how great a proportion of ordinary conversation is personal. Is this because the average mortal has so little conversational resource that he has to talk about persons? Is it because we read so little, and think so little, that we are left without any subjects except personal ones? Surely, in that case it would be better to keep silent. If you keep silent, people may think you uninteresting; but that is better than showing yourself malicious or envious.

We need especially to beware of that form of maliciousness which repeats the words of another with a change of emphasis or intonation which entirely alters their meaning.

The obligation to forgiveness is absolute. But we must not confuse forgiveness with emotional attitude. It is possible to forgive, in the case of a grave injury, some time before one can master one's emotions. If some one I have loved and trusted inflicts a severe injury upon me, there may be the entire readiness to forgive; but it may not be possible at once to think of the person with calm, or to wish to meet him. But it is the readiness to forgive that matters.

It is not uncharitable to prosecute a criminal who has injured us. We have not only ourselves

to think of; we are members of a society, and the interests of society may demand that we prosecute a case where our own impulse would lead us to let it go. To condone a crime is not an act of charity, but may involve a grave injury to our neighbors by its encouragement of ill-doing.

But one would not prosecute to satisfy spite or revenge. There must be a social injury to justify prosecution. One would not prosecute a child for injury of property in ordinary circumstances, or a servant found in petty stealing.

On the other side, the existence of a charitable spirit is evidenced by willingness to be practically helpful. To aid and succor in case of poverty or illness, to pray constantly for those who have injured, are obligations. Pray also for a forgiving spirit.

Another thing about which care should be taken is to watch against going about telling of the wrong that I think that I have suffered. When you examine your conscience as to whether you have forgiven one who has injured you, ask: Have I told anyone about this? So long as we enjoy telling of our injuries we may be certain that we have not forgiven them.

Remember, that our forgiveness is conditioned on our forgivingness. It is interesting to hear a

man who would not forgive a debt of five dollars, or his neighbor for some very minor injury, declaiming about the universal forgiveness of God. He cannot imagine that there should be such a state as hell; God would certainly forgive, and so on.

But having complied with the conditions, we are always certain of the pardon of God. "In fact, God, since he is a fountain of mercy, is unable not to succor, is unable not to forgive him who calls upon him humbly and with confidence, even if he had committed all the sins of the world a thousand times over." (Blosius.)

Our Lord looking out upon the world from the vantage point of the Cross found that the rage against him was due to ignorance. He saw that it was not himself that needed pity, but those his murderers. It is a point of view that it becomes us to take. Instead of merely denouncing evil and wrong — done whether against ourselves or others, try to understand it. There is probably not very much malicious hatred of good in the sins which are so prevalent in society to-day; rather they spring out of passions which their victims have never been taught to discipline.

There is not much in modern life to teach a child self-control; the circumstances of our education lead to the practice, if not the theory, of

individual anarchism. Those who are trained to the assertion of right, rather than the performance of duties, care little enough for the rights of others, and are likely to over-ride them rough shod.

On the other hand, our own practice of the Christian life, our imitation of our Lord, our spiritual watchfulness lest we injure the brother, should make us extremely careful in all social relations lest we offend through selfishness or disregard of the rights of others.

To be forgiving, as it carries with it the sense of being forgiven, is the way of peace. It ensures that interior calm which is so great a boon. Especially is it true that as we grow old, we find the value of a charitable temper. There is no better evidence of our Lord's life in us, than the universal love that we feel toward all about us. As we grow old we either grow charitable or we grow ill-tempered; and an ill-tempered old age is a very horrible thing.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin, through which I run
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have wonne
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done;
I fear no more.¹

¹ John Donne.

XII

THE INVITATION TO SELF- KNOWLEDGE

S. John IV, 16

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

Let us picture,

OUR LORD, sitting tired by the well in Sychar. There must have been many hours when our Lord was utterly weary with the work he had given himself to. But one who has others depending on him, others who must be guided, especially if they are weak and ready to be despondent, cannot ordinarily permit himself to show his weariness. But now with the disciples sent in to the city to get food our Lord sits weary. But however tired he may be, he is rarely permitted to rest. To him by the well comes the woman of Samaria with her pitcher for water. How often it happens that we approach some momentous crisis in our lives with-

out at all suspecting that the day we are facing will be anything but an ordinary day, as commonplace as the days that have preceded it! So this woman took her pitcher and went out to the well as on other days, and drew near to our Lord as to any chance traveller. But it was the most momentous day in her life. See our Lord watching her as she comes along the path, and recognising in her a soul in sin that needs his help. One imagines that the look of weariness passed from his face, that he became alert and ready to meet the woman, opening the conversation naturally with a request for a drink of water. There is always infinite tact in our Lord's individual dealing with souls — just the right word to lead on to the end to which he is aiming. So it is in this case; before she suspects it the woman's life is bare in our Lord's hands. Watch her when she realises that her life is revealed to one in whom she cannot but perceive some mysterious moral and spiritual authority; see her struggle to change the subject, to shift the conversation to familiar controversial ground as to the relative merits of Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim. But our Lord will not permit it; he brushes the local question aside with the assertion of the broad principle of spiritual worship, and goes on to the announcement of his own Mes-

siahship. Try to see the woman looking at our Lord in perplexity, and then — how natural the touch is! — leaving her waterpot and going her way into the city with her tale of the Stranger who told her all the things that ever she did.

Consider, first,

That this woman's ignorance of her true state was typical. It is constantly true of us that we know not what we do. No doubt in some vague degree this woman was conscious that her conduct was not altogether right; but probably it did not call out much criticism from her neighbors or friends; she was not conscious of any great amount of pressure from public opinion; she was doing as others did. It happens that if we are not criticised from without, if we are not brought to the bar of any decided public opinion, we easily acquiesce in the prompting of desire. One fancies that the woman of Samaria was simply an example of moral drift — we all display the phenomena of that more or less. There are many points on which we have little or no moral conviction, where we display in our conduct a moral opportunism. Lack of moral decision is very widespread. We do not notice it because most men keep fairly well within the limits of contemporary convention, and therefore do not at-

tract notice to themselves. It does not appear from the story that the Samaritan woman was very much impressed with her fault; she does try to avoid discussion of it, but she wonders more at the fact of our Lord's knowing than at what he knows. This is not at all surprising when we remember the half-heathen surroundings of her life. There was not very much moral energy in the race before the coming of our Lord, and since then the assimilation of the Gospel as moral energy has been very slow. We are still living in a state of society which sees constantly women living with those who are not their husbands, and there is no very effective protest even from those who are themselves living right on Christian principles. Men and women who are living in adultery are ever received by Christians, and to do otherwise exposes one to the charge of narrowness and gross uncharity.

Consider, second,

That ignorance is not just an accident and a trifling matter. We are morally responsible before God, not only for the things that we know, but for the things that we ought to have known and might have known. There is such a thing as involuntary ignorance; but usually our pleading that we are ignorant is a confession that we know

our ignorance and have not really tried to correct it. We cannot be excused from the obligations of life, because we have been too indifferent or too inert to fulfil them, or ever to ascertain what they are. Are you sure that you know the duties and obligations pertaining to your state of life? Or are you just living morally from hand to mouth on the conventions of the social circle to which you belong? That is a very dangerous method of life. You may wake at the particular judgment to the consciousness that you have never even tried to find what the will of God is for you, much less sought to follow it. That means, of course, that you are a moral destitute, one of the people whom our Lord pictures as building their houses on the sand to have them swept away at the first storm that arises: those whose surprised protest at the Day of the Lord will be, "When saw we thee anhungered or naked or in prison?" For the commonest of all ignorance is the ignorance of self; we may know many things,—we may have mastered many branches of human knowledge, and still be ignorant of the thoughts of our own hearts. The springs of life lie deep, and few there are that find them.

Let us, then, pray,

For enlightenment; pray, that God may lead

us from the darkness of ignorance to the light of the knowledge of him.

Almighty God, the Fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; we beseech Thee to have compassion on our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us for the worthiness of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our relation to our Lord is a revelation of ourselves to ourselves. We understand ourselves, as we see ourselves in him. It is the fallacy of the young who wish to "know life" that we understand sin by studying sin. We learn by experience, the saying goes; which is true; but the trouble is that the experience we so gain comes too late to be of much use. If life is to be guided, we need knowledge before experience; and therefore the experience that will profit us is the experience of others. We *might* learn by the experience of others, but we rarely do.

We do not really learn to understand sin by studying sin; we learn to understand sin by studying God. So we understand holiness, not by studying it in man, but by studying the holiness of God. Self-knowledge comes to us from Christ. We find in him the ideal of perfection, and it is

from the study of that that we learn what it is his will that we should be.

Both the ignorance and the optimism of the average man about himself come from the fact that he adopts a merely human standard of life and remains content with that. We are content to be as good as other people — which is not at all the vocation of the Christian life. “Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect,” is the standard set before us. We find it very easy to decline that standard and to content ourselves with one less perfect on the ground that perfection is too much to be expected from one in our state of life or with our limited powers and opportunities. It is enough for us if we attain to the standard of limited respectability we see satisfying our social circles. Why should we expect to be better than others?

We have, moreover, a truly wonderful power of self-deception. We are able to imagine that we are what we would like to be. It is marvellous — this power of ignoring facts. It comes out in people’s self-examination. The average man rarely seems able to get below the surface, and fathom the true motives which are inspiring his life. He contents himself with the most trivial scanning of the surface of life, resulting in the discovery of just the sins that he habitu-

ally commits, and which therefore he expects to find; but there is little deep probing of the inner life.

At times our self-esteem gets a shock. We experience some fall; we are so brought face to face with failure that we cannot escape the knowledge of it. We are revealed to ourselves. That is a very humiliating moment. Perhaps for an hour we realise the meaning of words we have so often used: we are miserable sinners. But we have a wonderful faculty of self-recovery. We begin to explain ourselves to ourselves. We failed, to be sure, but there were special reasons in this case. Under the special circumstances, we could hardly have been expected to stand. In fact, while the surface showing is against us, if we take all the circumstances into account, we can hardly be said to have failed at all. So we speedily get back our self-esteem.

Why is this?

There is a certain kind of unreality cultivated by the conditions of our social life. We find very little straightforward honesty there. Everything is governed by conventions, which are accepted and not questioned.

Follow an individual life; the life of any child. At the start the mother impresses an ideal, and tries to make the child conform to it. This ideal

is not usually a Christian ideal, but the social ideal of the time and circumstance. It has therefore no deep basis, nor impressive authority. Gradually the child comes to form an ideal of his own, growing out of his own time and circumstance, and differing from that which he has been taught. There are more and more thoughts and actions in which the mother has no part. These are suppressed in that relation. Therefore the surface of the life becomes insincere. There is an underground life which assumes immense importance.

But for the present, the importance is in the artificiality of the self-presentment. There come to be several parts played by the boy. 1. Mother's boy, tending more and more to insincerity. 2. The boy whom his companions know. 3. (Possibly) the boy whom his confessor knows. This boy, unless great care is taken, will become a mere stage property. 4. The boy as he knows himself. This boy in most cases is a convention. There is no true self-knowledge.

So it is throughout life. We play a number of parts. 1. The person in the family. 2. The person whom the public knows. 3. The person revealed to intimates. 4. The person as he appears to himself. 5. The person whom God knows.

There is constant danger of acquiescence in some partial view of one's life. There is a special danger of taking self at one's friends' estimate. It requires a well balanced judgment to reject the suggestion of one's own greatness or importance.

The effect of self-expression in the terms of one's ideal is that one is always expressing oneself in advance of attainment. A public teacher has to do this; he cannot express in terms of achievement, but must do so in terms of ideal. He will often have the appearance of claiming more than he has mastered. But there is no way of avoiding this.

There is nothing one would so much care to avoid as a smug self-satisfaction, a certain sleek contentment with self.

A good remedy for this is a saving sense of humour. If one is likely to take oneself too seriously a humorous side-glance at one's accomplishment in comparison with what one ought to have done will probably cure an over-estimate of self-importance.

We need to have our ideals very clear. They should afford an objective standard of effort which keeps us always on the alert and striving. The constant study of the Christ-ideal will give us a deepening conviction of what is of obligation

for us, and prevent us from facile acquiescence in present attainment.

Life must be constantly subjected to severe self-examination. There is a danger to people of a certain type of piety, of dwelling too much on the details of the devotional life, and too little on the homely detail of daily duty. There are those who seem to see only one side of life. They are apt to neglect the total impression that they are producing, in the family, for example. It is possible to be punctilious in the performance of religious routine, and at the same time to be exacting, and difficult to live with.

Of a passing acquaintance, someone asked Whitefield, "Is he a Christian?" "I do not know," was the answer; "I have never seen him in his home."

There is also the danger of excusing the decline of ideal by change of circumstances. It is charitable to take account of circumstances in judging others, but it is dangerous to excuse our own laxity on that ground. Our business is to dominate circumstances and not be dominated by them. Our Lord deals with this side of life in the Parable of the Excuses.

The grounds on which we excuse ourselves from the following of high ideals indicate that what we want is to be relieved from the pressure

of them. There are times of spiritual weariness when the pressure of the ideal is almost too much for us. But what we need is not less or a lower ideal, but spiritual refreshment. To yield to the sense of pressure would simply produce an uneasy conscience.

We can only build a life that is spiritually strong on the basis of dealing in absolute sincerity with ourselves and God. Remember the lawyer who came to our Lord, of whom it is said: "And he, willing to justify himself." That implies the sort of quibble which is evidence of insincerity.

We become discouraged by failure. But failure is not necessarily discouraging. It is always illuminative. When we have discovered the ground of our failure, we are on the way to correct it.

The ideals being there; and the self honestly estimated, work away from self to God. Do not look backward; look upward. Trust in the power and the love of God.

To learn, and yet to learn, whilst life goes by,

So pass the student days;

And thus be great, and do great things, and die,

And lie embalmed with praise.

My work is but to lose and to forget,
Thus small, despised to be;
All to unlearn — this task before me set;
Unlearn all else but Thee.¹

¹ Gerhardt Ter Steegen.

XIII

THE CALL OF URGENCY

S. Luke XIV, 17

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Come: for all things are now ready.

Let us picture,

OUR LORD preaching to a crowd which has gathered in some Galilean village street. Our Lord's fame has become so wide-spread in this region that the first report that he is coming sends people running to him. We can see them dropping their work and hurrying out into the street as the word is passed, "Jesus of Nazareth is coming." In many the report would just stir curiosity; they had heard from friends, from passing travellers, of strange things said and wonderful works done by our Lord, and they would be eager to see and hear for themselves. The rumour that the authorities at Jerusalem did not at all approve of Jesus and his teaching would add a certain flavor to the gratification of their

curiosity. But to others the news of his nearness would come as a gleam of hope in the darkness. Some paralytic who had long lain helpless had become familiar with the name of Jesus; the neighbors who came in from time to time had been saying, "If only Jesus of Nazareth would come this way he might heal our friend here as he has healed so many others." A blind man who has heard the story of how our Lord opened the eyes of the blind has been nursing the secret hope that some day the wonderful Master would come this way. So we see blind and lame folk hurrying along; sick folk borne on beds; mothers bringing their children; until when Jesus comes into the street a crowd at once besets him. His first work would be with the sick — there would be no possibility of quiet speaking till all these clamors for help were stilled. And then would come the instruction: a vivid story, illustrating some point of spiritual teaching; a parable which would arouse wonder as to what he meant. We can fancy that long afterward the village-folk when they met, would tell over the parable and dispute as to what Jesus meant them to understand. I fancy that there was something about his personality which held the crowd quiet and attentive even when their ignorance or hardness of heart left them uncomprehending of his

meaning. Try to see the crowd about Jesus as he gives the invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready."

Consider, first,

The constant theme of our Lord's preaching was the coming of the Kingdom — "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As we see him standing in the street with the sick and impotent folk all about him awaiting the healing touch of his hand, it is easy to make the blunder that the central fact of his mission was the dealing with the physical ills of human life. We might — many do — see in him the great Philanthropist. But all this work of healing was quite secondary in our Lord's mission. That mission centered in the thought of the coming Kingdom. Men must be made ready for that. The disciples who are attracted to him must be winnowed out and certain chosen with a view to the future work. What governed their selection, we infer, was their teachableness — their capacity to assimilate the mind of our Lord, and be prepared to carry on his work. This is one reason, we think, why he wanted very simple men. A College of Apostles, like any other college, would have been full of theory-spinners, anxious to apply certain original views to the meaning of our Lord's

work — the world has been full of them ever since. But our Lord wanted simple, teachable men, who would deliver the message as they received it. Consequently, because of their fidelity, the first Christians understood the central message of the Kingdom. They did not construe our Lord as a healer, a moralist, a philanthropist; they accepted him as a King into whose Kingdom they had been brought, as the Head of a Body of which they had been made members. Always in their thought Christ is supreme and they gladly subscribe themselves his subjects — “Slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They have no sense of thinking out a religion or forming a Church. Religion, Church, Christ,—these they have been brought to and gladly accept. We follow the first Missionaries on their journeys up and down the Roman Empire, and find the central message everywhere the same — the Crucified Jesus, risen and exalted by the power of God to be a Saviour and a King. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.”

Consider, second,

Has the Kingdom come to you? You have been praying a long time, “Thy Kingdom come.” Has your prayer been answered in your own life?

The coming of the Kingdom is a progressive fact. It has been coming since our Lord announced it; it will one day come to its full mastery of the world — The Kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of God and his Christ. But the Kingdom grows as it masters individual human lives and makes them the means and the instruments of our Lord's further self-manifestation. It is therefore within the power of each one to further the coming of our Lord by surrender to him so complete as to be his ready instrument. But so long as we are holding any power or affection back from Christ we are delaying the coming. One of the things that saddens one about one's own life is the discovery that there are activities of life that we are withholding from our Lord. There are provinces, so to say, that are withdrawn from his allegiance. There are areas dedicated to the service of special sins. It is curious, this withholding of entire submission to Christ and his Gospel. The invitation has gone forth; "Come, for all things are now ready"—but *we* are not ready! So the servants go out into the highways and byways seeking for guests. Why are we not ready? What does our self-examination show? Does it show unsubmissive passions, undisciplined appetites? Does it show a shrinking dread of what

would follow a complete surrender of self to Christ? Does it show a cherished sin clung to after the rest have been given up? Hear the urgency of our Lord's call: *Come, for all things are now ready.* The Supper waits for you! Why do you linger? Has the unchristian thing you are holding on to so much enriched your life that you cannot bear to give it up? Have you really found the answer to our Lord's question: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Have you found the precious thing which is worth more than the Kingdom of God? I think not. Come, then; give up the thing that is costing you so much, even the joy of complete self-realisation as the medium of our Lord's further coming. Give him your valued freedom, and become his slave. It is only those who have surrendered who know; it is only those who have lost self who have found its true value and use. It is only those who have given themselves in utter abandonment to the will of the Master, who enter into the joy of the Lord.

Let us, then, pray,

That we may hear our Lord's voice and follow him without delay. Pray that the work of the Kingdom may be the object of your utter self-devotion.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruits of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

.

There can be no manner of doubt that our Lord's immediate followers understood his teaching to mean that the advent of his Kingdom with power would take place within their lifetime. There are phrases which Christ uses that taken by themselves would justify such a belief. "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." The earliest preaching of the Apostles is filled with a sense of the imminence of the Coming.

Time demonstrated that the Coming would be gradual; and more mature meditation on our Lord's teaching gave proper emphasis to those elements of it which indicated the coming of the Kingdom as the result of growth and development, elements found especially in the parables.

It is hardly to be questioned, however, that we have swung to the far extreme of giving no attention to the Coming. What our Lord seems to have wished to produce in his followers was

a life held ready to meet him when he came. We do ill to lose this sense of urgency. The cry rings through the Gospels and Epistles. The followers of the Lord are to have their lamps trimmed and their loins girded, and to be ever on the watch. "Surely I come quickly," is the last message of the risen Lord. It is the mark of a declining Church when men begin to say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." If we are certain that he *will* come, then we shall be ready for him to-day.

This sense of urgency lies back of the missionary appeal of the Church. The fact that missions call out so little enthusiasm and are with such difficulty supported must mean that most Christians are indifferent to the urgency of the appeal. We look on with equanimity as generations of heathen pass through the experience of life and go out to another world without having so much as heard of Christ. It is not true that it makes no difference whether they become Christians or no. Are the heathen, then, lost? One does not have to believe that the heathen are lost to feel that it must make a tremendous difference in another life whether

they have in this life known Christ or no. Else what does the Incarnation mean?

You are a Christian? Do you feel that being a Christian has made no difference in your life beyond entitling you to believe that you will be saved? Have you got nothing out of Christianity in the way of spiritual development, of spiritual appreciation?

All things are now ready. I am tempted to say that all things are now ready — except the Church! The opportunity of Christianity is simply bewildering. The heathen world lies open to the Gospel as it never has before. It is urgent on us to come to its aid. The break-down of religious systems in the contemporary world has left multitudes seeking for light. What pathetic multitudes they are — these seekers. How they are the prey of any charlatan from the East, any religious imposter of the West. Anyone can count up numbers of cults which exist simply because of the number of empty souls longing for sustenance of some kind.

What is the Church doing? — the question is asked over and over. Why does it not rise to the opportunity? The Church is working hard. It never has worked harder than it is working to-day. Let there be no mistake about that! What

is it doing? *It is spending its energy on the task of trying to make the members of the Church do their ordinary Christian duty.* It is preaching — to Christians! It is organising countless societies — for Christians! Its clergy are running about the streets calling on Christians to try to induce them to come to the services of the Church! They are pleading with Christians that they will receive the Sacraments! And if they do not do this astonishing work of calling and pleading, Christians are angry and will not come to Church at all, or will go to some other parish!

It is the plain fact that the vast majority of the Church's energy, time, and money, is spent on its own membership; its membership is an obligation, not an asset. The work that should be effective in calling the heathen and the indifferent into the Kingdom of God, is absorbed by those who are already in!

The individual Christian should hold himself ready for the call to work in the vineyard; he should be planning and praying for an increase of work. He should be urging work on the Church; whereas, the Church is actually urging work upon him — and he is resenting it! He is inventing miserable excuses about his inability, his poverty, his weariness, and the like. He has been coddled and coaxed so much that he has come to

look on himself as a valuable person in the life of the Church, and feels himself ill-treated if others do not make it plain that they agree with him.

Are *you* a Christian? It is a tremendous thing to be a Christian. It means that we have recognised that Jesus Christ came into the world and lived and died for us, that we might be made new creatures in him. It means that we have accepted that salvation and professed ourselves the followers of a crucified Master. It means that the Christian vocation is the supreme interest in our lives. It is easy enough to judge our lives: we have only to ask, What is my supreme interest? What do I most willingly give myself to?

Do you feel the call of God a personal call, or has religion become a mere tradition, a matter of environment, or use and wont? There are many people whose religion is nothing but habit. Take them out of the environment where they are accustomed to practice it, and it will lapse, *and they will not miss it!*

Examine yourself to-day, as to how much religion means to you. Would you really find it hard to give it up? What would go out of your life that you really value if you were to abandon Christianity to-day? What are you actually paying for your religion, in terms of money, of time,

of energy? Is it costing you any sort of sacrifice? Does it at all imply the Cross? What persons are the better for the fact of your religion? What effect are you having on the world about you? On your friends? On your family? If you are a father or mother, what is the spiritual state of your family? Are your children being educated as Christians? Do they love the Christian religion because of the effect it has on you? Do they frequent the sacraments with you, or without you? Search deep.

Our great need is spiritual vision — the power to *see* what the meaning of the Christian life is and what are the opportunities that it offers us. It is possible for us to be languid spectators of the passing show, without discovering any personal contact. “Why standest thou here? Thou oughtest to become another man!”

There is a class of Christians who will resent what I have been saying — only it is most unlikely that they will ever see it! They are those who resent the pressure of religion. Am I not free? they ask. Yes: certainly. But what is freedom? Liberty to go your own way, regardless of obligation? There is no such liberty as that. We may choose to ignore obligations, but we cannot escape the effect of them. My spiritual

nature is affected by every obligation that I violate.

Freedom is liberty to fulfill my obligations. It is the ability to attain the ideals of life — the divine ideals that are expressed in the Christ-life. That is what our Lord is calling us to. Come: for all things are now ready. All things that pertain to life and godliness are offered to us in the rich abundance of the life of the Church: the Catholic Faith; the Catholic Sacraments.

We are not able to stand to one side and make no choice at all. We are confronted with the offer of the Gospel. We have to accept it or reject it. The pressure of the Kingdom forces men to choose. How have *you* chosen? Never mind others; how have you chosen? Have you given yourself to God in the love of Christ — or are you making feeble excuses?

Come, children, on and forward!

With us the Father goes;

He leads us, and he guards us

Through thousands of our foes:

The sweetness and the glory,

The sunlight of his eyes,

Make all the desert places

To glow as Paradise.

Lo! through the pathless midnight
The fiery pillar leads,
And onward goes the Shepherd
Before the flock He feeds;
Unquestioning, unfearing,
The lambs may follow on,
In quietness and in confidence,
Their eyes on Him alone.

Come, children, on and forward!
We journey hand in hand,
And each shall cheer his brother
All through the stranger land;
And hosts of God's high angels
Beside us walk in white;
What wonder if our singing
Make music through the night?

Come, children, on and forward!
Each hour nearer home!
The pilgrim days speed onward,
And soon the last will come.
All hail! O golden city!
How near the shining towers!
Fair gleams the Father's palace:
That radiant home of ours.

On! dare and suffer all things!
Yet but a stretch of road,
Then wondrous words of welcome,
And then the Face of God.

The world, how small and empty !
Our eyes have looked on Him ;
The mighty Sun has risen,
The taper burneth dim.

Far through the depths of Heaven
Our Jesus leads His own,
The Mightiest, the Fairest,
Christ ever, Christ alone.
Led captive by His sweetness,
And dowered with His bliss,
Forever He is ours,
Forever we are His.¹

¹ Gerhardt Ter Steegen.

XIV

THE INVITATION TO COMMUNION

S. John XXI, 12

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.

Let us picture,

AN early dawn by a lake — any lake you know will help you to compose the scene. A grey mist hangs over the water, a mist which changes to pearl and lavender when the sun strikes it. Through the mist you can see the fishing boats, their outlines softened by the iridescent curtain. Dim, blue waves lap the shore. The noise of oars, the voices of the fishermen, come with startling loudness through the morning silence. On the shore, a solitary man looks out through the mist, waiting for the boat to come within hail. These fishermen who are returning from a night of fruitless fishing, are newly gone back to a trade which they had abandoned years ago. There was a day when One came and stood

by them as they cared for the boats and the nets and said: "Come, and I will make you fishers of men,"—and they left all and followed him. And now, after leading them to limitless trust in him, he had, it seemed, failed and suffered death at the hands of his enemies. They were left with shattered hopes and broken hearts. The vision of the Messianic Kingdom had vanished like the mist which is melting here on the lake under the rays of the rising sun. What are broken-hearted men to do? Life may not seem worth very much, and yet one has to go on living. So they do the natural thing—turn to the ways of the old life before they were called to what had seemed a life mission. "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, we also go with thee." So they go to a night of work, yielding nothing. And now, in the grey light, they see a form on the shore, and hear a voice: "Children, have ye any meat?" With the sound of the voice in their ears, and with the full net which follows their obedience to its direction, there comes to them the certainty which finds utterance in S. John, "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." How the scene on the shore comes to us! The eager Peter, wading ashore, but then held voiceless by the strangeness of the situation.

So the other disciples, even the disciple whom Jesus loved, gather silent, fearful, hesitating, not daring to say or do anything except as Jesus bids them. They bring in silence the fish they had caught as Jesus bids them and lay them on the coals to broil. We gather that the meal was in silence — with what thoughts? Do they think of the last meal they had eaten with him — the Supper in the Upper Chamber? Does S. John think of the hours that he had spent beneath the Cross,— of the taking down of the Body and the laying of it in the grave? Does S. Peter think of the look on the staircase when the sense of his vileness came back to him and he went out and wept bitterly? Try to see Jesus and the disciples sitting about the fire on the lake shore. I fancy that no one ate very much!

Consider, first,

That our Lord by his passage through death and by his Resurrection has not withdrawn to an infinite distance from us. Such religious training as we for the most part get bids us think of our Lord as in "heaven" which presents itself to our imagination as vaguely distant; a place which certain "go to," but from which no one comes. We think of the appearances of our Lord to his disciples, after the Resurrection as intended

to certify them of that event and to give the producible evidence of it to be the basis of their future preaching: they "did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." But while no doubt his appearances were intended to furnish evidence of his Resurrection, that does not seem to exhaust their meaning. Indeed, our Lord never seems at all anxious to furnish evidence that is indisputable either as to himself or his mission, for the purpose of dispelling doubt from men's minds. He does show himself eager to resume relations with those who love and trust him, such that they may never be disappointed, but led on to ever deeper trust and love. That is, the appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection are not intended to make unbelief impossible; they are intended to show that love is unfailing: that he who loves his own, loves them unto the end, not only of this life, but of all lives; that beyond the Cross and the tomb there lay, not the great silence, but fathomless and inexhaustible love. The coming of Jesus is the reestablishment of personal relations with those who had felt their world go to pieces as the darkness came down on Calvary and the last cry went up from the Cross. He came back to show them that he is the same Master they had loved and trusted through the years of the ministry, to

make them feel that they could love and trust him still. He came back to prove that not only had he survived death, in the sense of immortality, but that he had survived it *as a human being*; that what they had to think of in the future was not the Son of God who had manifested himself as man, and had now returned to his preincarnate state of deity, but their Friend and Master, Jesus, still in their nature, and still under whatever changed circumstances, associating himself with their present lives and manifesting himself to them here. The Resurrection appearances assure them of the abiding Presence of Jesus.

Consider, second,

That this great gift of our religion, the gift of the Incarnate Jesus surviving in the Resurrection, and present with us to-day with an even deeper, because more purely spiritual, reality than he was to his Apostles before his Resurrection, is precisely the truth that the world is most set upon robbing us of. The world is insistent that we should eliminate from our religion the abiding humanity of our Lord; that we should accept Sacraments which are at most modes of action and not modes of presence. But the presence of God *Incarnate* is essential to our religion —

to give up that were to give up all the peculiar significance of Christianity. The *nearness of Jesus* lies at the root of all our belief and of all our experience. Our spiritual experience is an expression of Jesus here and now. We do not seek him in a distant heaven, we expect him on the shore of our lives. It is this sense that Jesus is here that makes it possible for us to go on at all. In the experience of the presence of Jesus we get rid of all sense of distance, of "appealing to heaven," of "speaking out into the silence."

Our prayers are said as to One who is by our side, listening. They are just the confidence we offer to the Friend. Just because we can feel the Presence, we can speak with intimacy, and without any sort of reserve. Our communions are the ways of this coming of Jesus. The soul surrenders itself and opens its doors to its Guest. Jesus is within the life of those who love him, and constantly manifests his presence to them. He makes himself manifest in little touches of love which we know chiefly through our impulse to respond. Now, we are drawn to lift up our hearts and speak to him for a moment of our love and of our hope; now, we are flushed with shame as we realise some word or act of ours is unworthy of him, and are led to make an act of contrition. Again it will be a gleam of light

that flashes into the mind giving us understanding and guidance. One day we are led to seek him in the pages of the Bible, and find him wonderfully there in some verse of S. Paul or S. John; on another, we are led to seek him in the hidden presence of the Tabernacle, and there commune with him heart to heart. On still another day we go out to find him in the lives of our brethren, and to love and minister to him there. But in all the varied moods and tenses of life there is for the lover one permanent fact — Jesus is here.

Let us, then, pray,

For an increasing experience of our Lord in our lives. Pray to find him not only in religious acts, but in all acts.

O Almighty God, who hast made us in Thine own image, and given unto us the enjoyment of many excellent gifts; enable us by Thy Holy Spirit to use these blessings to Thy glory. Grant unto us a devout reverence for all Thy works. Pour into our hearts a true love of all those who are called by Thy Name. Quicken our souls that we at all times may be sensible of Thy Presence; and make us day by day more fit to see Thee hereafter as thou art in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The invitation of the risen Lord is to union with him and to participation in his work. In one sense his work for us was accomplished when he ascended into the heavens and sat on the right hand of God. The work of redemption was then finished; the Kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers, that is, the means of salvation were placed at the disposal of everyone who would use them.

But in another sense, the work of the Kingdom was just beginning. What had been won for men, must now be offered to men. Therefore the King sends forth his servants, saying, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed; come unto the marriage."

So the work of the Kingdom stretches out before us. Each generation, as it comes upon the stage, is summoned to take up the work at the point where its predecessor laid it down, and to go on with it. We are each called to contribute to this work. We shall never in this world know the full meaning of the work, or the importance of our part in it. But we do know that we are held responsible for the execution of a certain part, which cannot be handed over to some one else but must remain undone, if we do not do it. No one can do two men's work in the Kingdom of God. Neither can we altogether

pick out our own work. We are assigned work here or there as the Master wills. Our life is controlled by our vocation. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching: or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

But in order to do the work at all there must be in us the strength to do it. There are those who think that spiritual work may be done and spiritual results attained, without any sort of preparation; that all that is needed is a good will. No doubt, the chief thing for the learner is a good will; but a good will does not teach one anything, unless it be to be submissive to the teaching authority. Every Christian is bound to be in some sort a teacher, and therefore every Christian is bound to learn his trade. The trade of a missionary is a very exacting one.

The strength to prosecute the work is the strength that comes from our keeping in close union with our blessed Lord. Our strength is the strength of Christ in us. To base work on anything else, is fatal. To rush out to do the

work of the Kingdom of God without having given ourselves to the life of the Kingdom, is fatal to the work. "Not by might, or by power, but by my Spirit."

Our spiritual life is the functioning in us of the life of our Lord. We have been taken up into the Incarnate Life and become members of our Lord's Body in order that the life that is in him may flow out through us, so that the world seeing us knit into the life of Jesus and manifesting that life, may be led to believe on him.

The universe is a sacramental fact. It is an outward and visible sign of a grace working in it. That grace is the presence of God. God is immanent in the universe. We learn to classify our observation of the universe under the conception of laws which express our thought of its uniformity. But that uniformity is only an expression of the constant willing of God.

God reveals his presence in the universe focussed, so to say, in the Incarnate God. God so expresses himself that he may, through union with our nature, bring us into closer union with himself. He still chooses to do this through the method of incorporation. (I) In baptism we are cleansed from all sin and taken into union with our Incarnate Lord and made partakers of the divine nature. (II) In confirmation this

union is strengthened and clarified for us by the impartation to us of the Holy Ghost as an indwelling Guest. We are henceforth his temples. (III) In view of our weakness the mercy of God has provided the means whereby we can be restored from the disaster of sin in case it should overtake us. The sacrament of penance is the sacrament of restoration. (IV) Especially to be noted is the effect of the Holy Communion, as the sacrament of support, the means of sustaining the life that has been begun.

The Holy Communion is the special bond between our Lord and ourselves. It is the renewal of his indwelling, the constant strengthening of his hold upon us. Our attitude toward the Holy Communion is that of those who feel the constant need of renewed strength. The spiritual strength that is imparted to us is constantly expended in our exercise of the spiritual life. Whether we are resisting temptation or developing the virtues, there is need of imparted strength. So we go to our Lord as he offers himself to us in the Communion.

How often? What is the rule about communion? There can in the nature of the case be no rule for the mature Christian. Rules are for Children and spiritual incompetents. The only rule that can be given for those who are pressing

on in the way of righteousness is the rule of desire. I think we may safely assume that our Lord wants to impart himself to us as often as we want to receive him.

Is this to receive the communion mechanically? It is of course possible to treat it in that way. Any truth or practice can be misused. There are those who conceive the universe as a mechanical system, and not as the manifestation of God. But we know what the true view of the universe is. We know that the order of nature is the perfectness of his working, and not the monotony of a machine. Its uniformity is the uniformity of a will that does not change. And so the sacramental system expresses the uniformities of the spiritual Kingdom of Grace.

As we do not look for constant miracles — indeed constant miracles is a contradiction in terms — and if they do occur attribute them, not to lawlessness, but to laws of God that we do not know, or have not been able to classify; so we do not look for spiritual activity outside the revealed order of the spiritual Kingdom. We do not deny that such activity may occur; but its occurrence would simply mean that we have not grasped all of God's method. An action of God outside the sacramental system no more perplexes us than a material fact outside our classifications and laws.

But you cannot build on the unusual and the exceptional. You must build on the known. You cannot build the spiritual life on the possibility that God will act in ways other than those which he has revealed. If we do not know that there is a spiritual order in the life of the Christian, we cannot conduct a spiritual life at all. We can only look for happy accidents.

The sacraments are no more magic than the law of gravitation. Rather, it is reliance on magic to assume that God will conduct our spiritual training by a series of indeterminate and unrelated acts. The growth in holiness of a soul is not a series of unrelated events.

The devotional — ascetic and mystical — theology of the Church is an attempt to ascertain and register the laws of the Kingdom of God. If there are no laws, or if they cannot be ascertained, we live in spiritual chaos, and not in a world (cosmos) at all. And as scientific progress is conditioned on the ascertaining, registering and obeying of the laws of the natural world; so spiritual progress is conditioned on the like ascertaining, registering and obeying the laws of the spiritual life.

The spiritual life therefore is not a mystery that each one has to solve for himself. Its roads are already charted. The experience of the

saints is an uniform experience. Their lives are noteworthy, not as "miracles of grace," but as instances of the uniform working of spiritual laws; they are lives of obedience, assuming the uniformity of spiritual nature.

The conception of the Christian as a new Columbus, going out to the exploration of unknown seas is not altogether accurate. Rather, he is a voyager on well known seas. What is new, is not the sea, but his experience of it. There would be small use in speaking or writing of the spiritual life at all, if it were an unique personal adventure. But these facts do not detract from the mystery and wonder of the spiritual life, any more than the mystery and wonder of the heavens are destroyed by the fact that others have looked on them before we trained our telescope on the stars.

Bread that cometh down from Heaven,
Fruit of the eternal tree;
Banquet which my God hath given
Even unto me;
Lo, before the world that scorneth,
I give thanks and eat,
At the table in the desert,
Spread with heavenly meat;
Wine of the divinest gladness,
Milk and honey sweet.

In the wilderness unwatered,
In the lonely land,
This the feast of God made ready
By His Mighty Hand;
Thither came I, spent and weary,
Hungry and athirst,
From the wastes of thorn and thistle
Of the land accurst,
There to find the feast where angels
Serve, but may not share —
None but Christ and His redeemed ones
Gathered round Him there.
There the desert blossometh,
There the waters spring;
There the Psalteries make music,
There the blessed sing.
By the Heavenly Banquet strengthened,
Short the way to me,
Over moor and fen and mountain,
O'er the pathless sea;
For the glory of His City
Shines along the road
Where the feet unwearied journey
To the Home of God.

XV

THE INVITATION TO CHILDREN

S. Matthew XIX, 14

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us picture,

THIS scene of our Lord blessing little children. Most likely, some mothers, noting his kindness, thought to bring their children to him for his blessing. We see them coming timidly, not knowing how they will be received. But see! before they reach Jesus they are stopped by the Apostles. We seem to see the Apostles rather fussily active about our Lord, as though they thought of themselves as the ushers at the court of a king. "No! you cannot bring children in here. They are not ill, are they? Jesus is very busy healing people. He has to see a delegation from Jerusalem. Then he is going to begin

teaching, and we cannot disturb him. Why should you expect that he would stop to bless a baby?" "But when Jesus heard it, he was much displeased." Children are important to Jesus. He, first, of men, made known to us their true worth. "Their angels do always behold the face of your Father which is in heaven." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." "See our Lord taking the children one by one in his arms and blessing them and giving them back to their mothers. Jesus came as a little child and had been sheltered by the adoring love of his spotless Mother. His coming gave a new consecration to childhood; but his disciples had not learned this lesson. They stand a little abashed, while our Lord, putting them aside, called the children to him. As the mothers go away we catch a little glance of triumph thrown at the mortified Apostles; a little toss of the head by those who, after all, knew what our Lord would do. The momentary displeasure of

Jesus passes away in a smile as he sees the discomfiture of his followers. He took the opportunity, may be, to gather them about him and explain the worth of children. He let them see the wonder of the purity which the angels guard, and before which the gates of Heaven swing open. Perhaps he let them into the secret of the baptism which they were later on to minister, and which was to be the means of taking little children into Christ, enduing them with eternal life, and making them partakers of the divine nature.

Consider, first,

It is with our Lord's birth that a new era begins for childhood. There was, no doubt, a certain appreciation of the beauty of childhood before our Lord came as a child. Still, one feels that the Old Testament does not make much of childhood: it committed the child to God, but it did not make much of the child as such—he was blessed for what he was to be in the Kingdom. Outside the Covenant, in the Greek world especially, there is a keen feeling for child-life, but no realization of its sanctity. The most horrible treatment of children could go on unrebuked by the side of such poetic appreciation. It is doubtful if human beings ever truly respect anything unless they regard it as sacred. The

decay of the conception of sanctity in modern life has been followed by an appalling increase in levity and vulgarity. Our Lord's teaching expects of us a great reverence and care in the treatment of child-life. From the point of view of the Christian religion children are not toys to amuse us, not angelic beings to sentimentalise over, not predestined slaves of the modern industrial system to be carefully prepared for their fate, but children of the Father, to be brought to him and to be trained in his love. From the cradle of any baby the imagination sees paths running out in all directions, any one of which may be chosen in the future. But which one will actually be chosen, depends, how largely! on the care and training, the influences which are thrown about the open years. Those are terrible words of our Lord: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones—it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea." They are words which do not seem to have exclusive application to the actual leading of a child into sin; they have a broader application to those whom the education of a child is committed. Do they not indeed imply the condemnation of godless educational systems? It is out of the early teaching, the family life, the school,

the social environment, that the influences come that shape the life for good or evil. It is upon the social state into which the child is born that the shadow of our Lord's warning rests: do not offend. As we look out into the life of to-day and see, not only its godless education, but the associations and amusements that it provides for boys and girls, one feels that the execution of the sentence cannot be far off. A society that deliberately corrupts its children must come to a stern judgment.

Consider, second,

If we are to have a proper appreciation of our Lord's teaching we must read it through the child-spirit. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The prime quality of childhood is its teachableness — its open mind. The child puts no obstacles in the way of instruction. It is very different with the adult. He approaches new truth with all sorts of reserves and hesitations. When it is asked of him that he go on to greater appreciation of the Gospel and of the Gospel-life, he is obstructed and inhibited by fears as to the demands that will be made on his life if he yields, as to the sacrifices that will be called for. He is unable to yield simply to the

“thus saith the Lord.” To the adult his religion is only one among many interests, and very rarely the supreme interest. Consider,—how is it with you? What in life do you value most? What would you surrender last, if you were called on to make choice? In what do you find the most intense interest? I do not mean what takes up the most time or occupies the most attention: inevitably, business, family matters and so on do that. But what is the central interest which is controlling all the rest? What is controlling and shaping your business activity, directing the life of the family? It is not what is at the circumference but what is at the center that is of supreme importance. Is your mind open, and are your ears attentive to the message of God? Have you eagerness to learn; have you, before all else, humility to hear and to receive? The voices which come to us in later life are terribly perplexing: there is a crying of lo! here, and lo! there. Have you that simple, childlike love of our Lord which will enable you to distinguish between the voices, and pick out *his* amid all the tangle of sounds? We know that the child, lost in a crowd, will turn at the sound of his mother’s voice heard amid a hundred others because he has been accustomed to listen to it and to love it. If you *are accustomed to listen* to the voice of our Lord, and to love it,

you will not be deceived by other voices, however attractive!

Let us, then, pray,

For the humility and teachableness of a little child.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we beseech Thee by the innocence and obedience of Thy holy childhood, and by Thy reverence and love for little children, do Thou guard the children of our land; do Thou preserve their innocence; strengthen them when ready to slip, recover the wandering, and remove all that may hinder them from being brought up in Thy faith and love: who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

The Incarnation of our Lord has had a deep effect on the life of Children. The narratives of the infancy have left an indelible mark. They have entered deep into the imagination of the race, and all childhood where they are known is influenced by Bethlehem and Nazareth.

It is not necessary to draw the dark line that is often drawn around the life of children in heathen lands. No doubt, parents everywhere have loved and cared for their children. The writings of Tagore show a beautiful appreciation of childhood. The point is that the Christian

religion can do for children what no other can. It alone understands children in their relation to God, and the means whereby God wishes to influence them.

The Christian religion starts from a belief in the capacity of the child to know and love God. It does not wait for the child to grow up to teach it the faith of Christ. "The child cannot understand," we are told. Well, it learns as it goes along; and one does not have to be a learned person to pray to God.

The Christian religion believes in the possibility of sacramental action on the spiritual nature of the child, and therefore brings the child to baptism and confirmation. "The child does not understand what it is doing," says the objector. The child understands that it is coming to God, its Father, for his blessing, and that is all it is doing. In the sacraments something is being done to the child, there is an action of God on its soul, regenerating, renewing, strengthening. The child does not have to be a theologian to be confirmed; he has to want the gift of God.

The Church's theory of the spiritual life is that it is the work of God the Holy Spirit, working through means that are divinely established. These means are to bring God to the child and the child to God. What is necessary to understand

is that God is offering a blessing; what it is necessary to do is not to oppose the will of God, but to have a simple faith in him. God will always work for us — children or adults — if we will only let him. Our attempts to help are for the most part hindrances. A mother thinks she is taking a proper care of her child when she says, "He is not old enough to be confirmed." As a matter of fact she is keeping the child away from a blessing that God wants to give.

The Church's theory of spiritual life is that it unfolds gradually under the influence of the grace that is ministered to it, and that if no obstacles are put in the way, the life will unfold from innocence to sanctity. This is not an unreal optimism. The Church is not disregarding facts. Its use of the sacrament of penance shows that it appreciates the very real temptations to which the child is exposed.

It would be fatal to ignore the place of temptation in the life of the child. He must face the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Temptation is the divine method of training. The soul that has not been tested is weak, or at least has no ground for assuming that it is strong. A conviction of strength is the outcome of victory over temptation. An untried strength is an unknown strength.

The chances of the modern child in the face of temptation cannot be viewed optimistically.

The divine purpose for the child is that its first spiritual training should come to it through the family. But under present conditions the family, instead of being the training place of the child in holiness, is his greatest danger. The Christian family has almost gone out of existence. How many children are there whose religious training in the family goes farther than being taught some very elementary prayers, and being told that he should not do certain things: what things, appears to be largely a matter of luck.

The child early learns to observe that the family takes a very limited interest in religion. That they do not put in practice very much of what he is taught is the Christian life. Many times he is left to practice the religion of the family by himself, with the natural feeling that as soon as he is out of leading-strings, he will be allowed to drop it altogether. He would be much better off in a family frankly heathen.

And when the average child comes to face his education, he finds, except under rare circumstances, there is no provision made for Christian training. The school frankly ignores religion; or else it treats it in a way that does not suggest that

it has any importance as compared with latin grammar or basket-ball. It is probably better that the child should be in a public school where religion is just ignored as no concern of the State, than to be in a private school, where it is nominally respected, but where it is quite ineffectually taught. What chance has the child when he passes from the lower grades of education to one of the colleges which Christian men endow to teach infidelity to their children?

There is nothing in the modern child's education that at all fits him to meet the lure of the world. "He has been taught morals?" Not at all. It is a chance if his parents or teachers so much as know what Christian morals is. What he is in fact taught under the guise of morals is a set of conventions and taboos which are current in the social set in which he is being brought up. These have little if anything to do with the Christian religion. They have no impelling power and no restraining force in the face of strong temptation.

And there is no avoiding the temptation he is bound to meet. The world, the flesh and the devil press themselves on his notice. And he finds sin very attractive. It is useless to talk platitudes about the unsatisfying nature of sin.

Sin gives just what it promises — a certain immediate enjoyment and gratification. That really is what a child wants. And as he has never been taught self-restraint, he takes it.

What have we to set over against all this? What spiritual training does the Church offer the child? A Sunday School which under the circumstances cannot be other than ineffective. At best, it is supposed to supplement the family training — which in reality does not exist. I have very rarely known a mother who took so much interest in her child's Sunday School lesson as to see that it was learned. It is, of course, useless to speak of fathers. I think that most priests would agree that the best results in spiritual training were attained where the family is utterly indifferent — so indifferent as not to attempt to do anything. A child not interfered with is likely to follow spiritual promptings.

The spiritual life of a child is a very delicate thing. It needs to be surrounded by positive influences of a constantly helpful sort. The negative should be reduced to the lowest terms, and the positive dwelt upon. The influences of the environment are constantly and silently working. The family talk is of tremendous importance. What is the impression that the child gets at the

lunch table, when the family has just returned from Church?

The books that are to be read should be chosen with the greatest care. The plastic mind of the child is constantly being influenced by what he reads or what is read to him. He needs not books that will interest him, but that will direct his interest rightly.

His prayer life needs watching. It is ridiculous, or rather it is tragic, to teach a child a few prayers and then do nothing more. Prayers should be constantly changed with the changing life. New objects of prayer should be introduced, lest interest wane. The prayer-life should be treated as a growing life which needs constant care and nourishment.

The child needs moral instruction in regard to the ordinary temptations of life at the time when these will appeal to him. There has been a hysterical and morbid excitement about sex training. The necessary instruction in such matters can be given very easily and simply, and without excitement.

Above all, the child ought to be taught the greatness of self-control. If he looks on himself as a responsible being who has to face temptation, and to whom the grace of God is always accessible, he will meet life well.

I give you the end of a golden string;
Only wind it into a ball,—
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.¹

¹ Blake.

XVI

THE INVITATION TO THE THIRSTY

S. John VII, 37

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

Let us picture,

THIS scene at the feast in Jerusalem. Each morning during the time of the celebration, water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam and carried in a golden vessel by a priest, and poured out over the altar on which the morning sacrifice was to be offered. It was discontinued on the last day of the feast, the discontinuance signifying that Israel had now come to the land of pools of water. It was on this day, when no water was drawn, that our Lord offered himself as the fulfilment of Israel's hopes: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Try

to see Jesus offering himself to the crowd gathered at the Feast of Tabernacles. There was something deeply impressive about his manner and his words so that for the moment the volatile crowd was influenced. "Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, this is the Christ." But the old doubt returns to divide them: "But some said, shall Christ come out of Galilee?" All their discussion was fruitless. A crowd never gets anywhere until it finds a leader. And for this crowd leaders are at hand in the chief priests. So the words of Jesus stir the people for the moment and then the impression passes. If our Lord at that moment had offered himself as a national leader no doubt he would have found many who would have accepted him. As he could not offer himself as a leader for their nationalistic aspirations, but only as a guide to spiritual ideals, he failed of a following. That was always his fate. When men found that he called them to a spiritual Kingdom, they declined his invitation and left him to be crucified. That has always been his fate. When the Church has identified itself with some cause of immediate human interest, men have been ready to applaud the Church, though that in reality was the hour of its defeat. When the Church declines the

alliance with Cæsar and pursues its ideals of an unworldly and sacrificed life, then men fall away; but then is the hour of its triumph. Our Lord's triumph is not the triumph of numbers but the triumph of spiritual motive. He has not gained a disciple when a man follows him for any equivalent of the loaves and fishes; he has only won a victory when his Spirit entering in possesses the soul of a man, and, casting out the devils of worldliness, dwells there in security.

Consider, first,

The difficulty we have in making full surrender to our Lord! Yet it is he alone who can satisfy all our legitimate desires. All the worthy cravings of our nature find their accomplishment in him. If any man thirst, let him come: and it makes no difference what his thirst is. Our nature is essentially spiritual and our spiritual powers are seeking development and realisation. But they are hindered in their development by a mass of superficial appetites which clamor for gratification, and which, just because of their obtrusive voices, impress us with a sense of their importance. A child's love of noise and taste for sweets develops long before you can call out any disciplined control of impulse or appetite: but it does not follow that the impulses and the

appetites are the important things about the child. Nor is it true at any time of life. The deep-seated capacities for spiritual living, the qualities which, under control, can bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, are the truly important endowments of a man. But while superficial powers and appetites grow rankly by correspondence with the world in which they find a significance and gratification, the fruits of the Spirit grow only through union with our Blessed Lord. By virtue of his union with us he communicates to us his Holy Spirit which becomes in us a fountain of water springing up into Eternal Life: becomes in us, that is, a source of energy which can transform our lives into the likeness of our Incarnate Lord. It is a question, then, of what we value, for what we value, we can easily obtain. I say *easily* because in reality there is no more difficulty in cultivating virtues than vices. It is true, that whatever return we may expect from sin we may expect at once, while the fruits of virtue are slow in coming to maturity. But that does not mean that one is easier or more certain of attainment than the other. It does mean that the attainment of the fruits of the Spirit require a persistence and continuity of willing to bring them to maturity that the fruits of sin do not. But our Lord is the guarantee that fidelity to his ideal of

character will, if we faint not, be crowned with success, and that his Spirit, once accepted, will be the Guide of life, will lead us safely to the green pastures of Eternal Life.

Consider, second,

Whether you have found in our Lord complete satisfaction of your desires. I do not mean have you wholly attained the accomplishment of your spiritual ambitions; that will never be the case in this life. But while we find the Spiritual life which results from union with our Lord and the possession of his Spirit a constantly growing and expanding experience, we also find that it is a *satisfying* experience. Consciousness of imperfection there must be. Indeed, this paradox is true: The more perfect we grow, the less perfect we seem; seem to ourselves, I mean, because increasing spiritual attainment means increasing insight and increasing severity of judgment. For when we say that the Spiritual Life is a satisfying experience we mean, not that we are increasingly satisfied with self but with our Lord. We find in him the means of satisfying all in our nature that is pure and godlike. And, amid all the stress and strain of our battle with opposing forces — the world, the flesh and the devil — we find the

growing experience we have of our Lord translated into interior strength and peace. The battle is severe, but we go to it light hearted as those who are sure of the victory. But this is only on condition of a progressive effort to realise all that union with our Lord means. If the water of the Spirit is to flow from him to us there must be on our side a great eagerness. That is a constant point of failure: there are a great many who are willing to be saved; there are not so many who will be saved. But all the energy cannot be on the divine side; if there is an energy in giving there must also be an energy in receiving. Passive reception is not enough. We must so receive the energy of the divine life as to transform it into the energy of our own human living. Are you quite sure that that is what is taking place in your experience? The divine offer is made to *you*: "If *any man* thirst, let him come." Have *you* come? Have you cared enough to be active? Has the desirability of our Lord overcome the inertia of acquired habit, or the opposition of rooted sin? See these people on the last day of the feast listening to our Lord's invitation to come; and then just disputing among themselves whether he is the Prophet, or the Christ, or whether indeed it is not stupid to expect either the Prophet or the Christ to come from Galilee!

Are you still hesitating, doubting, withholding full allegiance? Are you wondering about Christ rather than finding him wonderful? Have you so come to the Living Water that flows from him that your soul is filled with the divine Presence?

Let us, then, pray,

For the fulness of his grace. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with the sense of the divine Presence.

O God, forasmuch as without Thee, we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

As we read history we are liable to become very pessimistic about the religious attainments of humanity; but there is one thing that stands out clearly, which is that humanity needs God and knows that it needs God. The human race may seem very blundering and incompetent in its religions, but it is quite certain that it needs a religion of some sort and never gives over the quest for it. Man is religious by nature, and the occasional atheists who appear are clearly artificial products.

“My soul is athirst for God; yea, even for the living God,” might well be taken as the motto of the whole race. The workings of the religious

instinct in the attempt to find God, or to picture to itself what God is like, make up the greater part of man's spiritual history. Much of the seeking, guided only by the instinct, leads to things curious or grotesque; in the nature of the case the full truth about religion could only come to man through revelation.

It is revelation that in due time crowns man's seeking after God. Our Lord's promise to such seekers is, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The promise is to those who *seek*; we must look within ourselves for a certain spirit of discontent with our present attainment and accomplishment. Spiritual contentment is a mark of sloth.

According to S. John's explanation, the Living Water that our Lord will give is the Holy Spirit. And it is this Spirit who comes to us who are united to our Lord's divine humanity and who creates in us the desire of spiritual things. He inspires us with spiritual ideals which can only be satisfied by the possession of God.

I suppose that when our devotional training is slight we are apt to ask ourselves what is meant by a thirst for God, and do not always find it easy to answer. We take up the language of devotional literature and try to make something of it

and are not very successful and put it aside as unreal. But we need to beware lest we think that what is unreal to us in a certain stage of devotional experience is unreal to others or in itself. There is no danger greater than the making of our own experience the standard by which all experience is to be tried.

Rather, we must bring our own experience into contrast with the more advanced experience of others with a view to finding what we lack and in what direction we need to work.

We can do this readily enough by trying ourselves by the standard of the Old and New Testaments. They are both saturated with the conviction of the need of God, and the conviction that God is accessible. In prophets and psalmists we find men of wonderful and rich religious experience. They have found God. God has come into their lives to enrich them and guide them. They find no difficulty in opening their lives to God and there is no doubt that the voice which comes to them is the voice of God.

In even a higher sense is this true of the New Testament saints. Recall the details of the spiritual experience of S. Paul, for example; or the sort of experience of God that is back of the Epistle to the Hebrews. God to these men is not

a difficult problem to be solved, he is a personal friend with whom they have continual converse and on whom they continually rely.

The same thing is true of the long line of devotional writers of the Church. There is a devotional tradition running down through the ages. There never has been a time in the history of the Church when its inner life of sanctity was not being expressed through the writings of mystics and poets. We can hardly charge with unreality all these who have given the highest expression to the fact of the divine union with man. Our humility requires us to recognise that we are lacking in spiritual attainment so long as the writings of the saints remain sealed books to us.

What then is this thirst?

It is what in matters of scientific or philosophical import is called the desire for the truth. Every one talks about it as though it were the consuming passion of humanity. I confess that it does not seem to me that the passion for truth of the average student is overwhelming. It is usually a very mild desire that manages to tolerate in life a good many other desires without any apparent sense of disproportion or discomfort. Still, the phrase expresses an ideal. The student recognises that what is the justification of his life is the passion for truth.

Then, there are great men of science, great artists and so on, in whom the thirst is evident as a consuming passion. They are quite willing to sacrifice the things that most men count valuable in order that they may attain to their ideal. They are willing to watch and labor and hunger to gain some additional scrap of knowledge, some added power of artistic expression. It is no exaggeration to say of many men of any generation that they literally sacrifice their lives to the attainment of truth.

It is not otherwise with the Christian. He recognises God as the end of his life. To know God more and more is his unwavering aim. There are other aims that he tolerates. Still we cannot say that on that account he is dishonest when he expresses his ideal in the highest terms. While there are of necessity minor aims which are due to his life in a human society, the important point is that his life shall be controlled by a spiritual principle. There is a recognised action of the Spirit on his spiritual nature that impels him to seek the will of God. His conscience is restless in the presence of his own imperfect work. He feels the urge of the ideal of perfection and is discontented so long as he is not striving upward toward some vision of God. Indeed, we might express it that his life is governed by vision.

The desire for God is a real desire wherever there is a sincere effort after goodness. If we try to make actual the thing that we see, we are striving toward God. This desire runs through all degrees of intensity, and many stages of accomplishment. It rises and falls with time and circumstance. To-day it is very vivid and we are eager and hopeful, and rejoice; tomorrow it is gone and we are depressed, and doubtful of all the experience of the past.

It finds its most intense expression in the writings of the saints. God the Holy Ghost has led them to record for our learning the experience of God that they have found in their search for him. They are seekers all their lives long, and here in their writings is the proof that their search has not been in vain. God has revealed himself to them in many ways, and the result is that their lives have given manifold response, with the result that the life of sanctity is the most varied of all lives.

To appreciate the meaning of sanctity we must give days and nights to the study of the lives of the saints. They are the spiritual heroes of the Church, and our own spiritual ancestors and examples. It is in them that we find revealed the possibilities of the life of sanctity.

They are not average Christians. They are normal Christians. Our mistake is to regard

them as exceptional and therefore unimportant as examples. They are, no doubt, quantitatively exceptional in the Church; not sporadic variations from the type, but the very type itself. We have no right to set for our standard anything but the type. No medical student would think of taking the average achievement in the medical profession as the ideal to be aimed at. Nor should any Christian be satisfied with the average achievement of the Christian Church. We look to the saint to find what our expression of the Christian life should be.

Of course our relation to our ideal is quite other than that of the medical or other student to the leaders of his profession. Both the ideal toward which we work and the power by which we work toward it is supplied to us from without. The Christian life is a revealed life. And it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. Our life is a life of coöperation with God: he gives the power and we coöperate by the surrender of our wills to him, becoming thus the instruments of his working.

We are mastered by the beauty of the ideal life as our Lord shows it to us and exemplifies it in his own life and in the lives of his saints. The more we yield ourselves and live into the ideal, the more comprehensible it becomes.

No coward soul is mine,
 No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere;
 I see Heaven's glories shine,
 And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
 Almighty, ever-present Deity!
 Life — that in me has rest,
 As I — undying Life — have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
 That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
 Worthless as withered weeds,
 Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
 Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
 So surely anchored on
 The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
 Thy Spirit animates eternal years,
 Pervades and broods above,
 Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
 And suns and universes cease to be,
 And Thou wert left alone,
 Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for death

Nor atom that His might could render void :

Thou — THOU art Being and Breath,

And what Thou art may never be destroyed :¹

¹ E. Bronte.

XVII

THE INVITATION TO KNOWLEDGE

Revelation IV, 1

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.

Let us picture,

S JOHN, looking through the door opened in heaven. He was "in the Spirit" when he saw the things which he undertakes to describe to us. And we have to be in the Spirit, that is given up to the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, if we are to understand him. It is the Spirit which takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Through the door that is opened, S. John sees, first of all, in the midst of heaven, the Throne and the Sitter upon the Throne. And what impresses S. John about him is not, as we, perhaps, should have imagined, the awful majesty of him whom he sees; S. John is not filled with fear as he beholds him that

sitteth upon the Throne; but he is filled with a sense of the beauty of God. "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the Throne, in sight like unto an emerald." And as his eye wanders from the central Figure and takes in the rest of heaven, as it notes the Elders and the living Creatures, he perceives that they do not prostrate themselves in fear, but that the feelings which they express are feelings of worship and praise: "And when those living Creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the Throne, who liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty Elders fall down before him that sat on the Throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the Throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and were created." So heaven comes to us in terms of life and beauty: of life active in the praise of God. These symbolic figures about the Throne are the representatives of all creation offering itself to the Creator. Then, from the worship of the Creator we pass to the adoration of the Lamb; we see the Elders and the living Creatures prostrate before him, and we see him through the mist of the prayers of the saints

which they pour from the golden vials. We hear the strains of the New Song arise till they fill all the heavens: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and madest us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the Throne and the Living Creatures and the Elders — saying, with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Picture S. John, wrapt in vision, seeing these things, and then opening his eyes to find about him the familiar things of every day life! How different his life would seem now that he had seen reality! Would he take up the round of the day with distaste and weariness, or would he take it up with a deeper sense of consecration? I think it must have been the latter. I think that when he next celebrated the divine mysteries, and took in his hands the Bread and broke it and said: "This is My Body," he would see with his spirit the Lamb as it had been slain, and catch the strain of the anthem he had heard, as he prostrated himself before the altar of the earthly Church in worship. He would quite con-

sciously join himself with the host of heaven as it falls down before the altar-throne of the Lamb.

Consider, first,

That heaven is not presented to us as a distant fact to which we are without relation, and of which broken echoes and rarer glimpses reach us now and then,— too broken and rare to permit us to have any real understanding of the fact. On the contrary, the thought given us about heaven is surprisingly full and rich, so much so that here it is possible only to indicate a point or two. What strikes us first is, no doubt, the fact that heaven is presented to us as a social fact. The life that goes on there is expressed in terms of communion, and of a communion which is essentially like the communion that we know. The heavenly life is expressed in such terms as honor, glory, thanksgiving, wisdom, blessing, strength. We know the meaning of these terms and feel that the lives of which they are the expression will not be strange. It is a community of distinct personalities, where whatever riches of character we take with us, or hereafter develop, will remain our possession. Those in heaven are neither absorbed into God and so lost to self, nor transformed into some other sort of being with no personal continuity with this life. Whatever of

character-riches we may garner, whatever mature fruits of this life we may take with us, will prove of use in our intercourse with others. And as our acquisitions are diverse, so shall we appear diverse, and that diversity will be the ground of mutual recognition. We expect in heaven a world of human beings made glad by an attained and growing human perfection, and, because of our very diversity, finding place for sympathetic human intercourse. We have the full right to infer that powers developed here will find added significance hereafter. It were grotesque to suppose that heaven is a scene wherein all those who have served God faithfully here will find what they have acquired in the way of spiritual attainments without meaning and without relation to the life they have now entered. A conception of the future state of the spirit as a state strictly continuous with this and therefore intelligible in terms of present experience is a result of a conviction of the consistency of God. When we are told that we do and can know nothing of the future our answer is that we do and can know much of the future because it grows out of what has gone before, and, whether for good or for evil, must be characterised by an inner consistency.

Consider, second,

That the sense of the heavenly life of the future as having its ground and spring in the life we are now leading is one of the constant features of New Testament teaching. Cause and effect as the inner account of spiritual reality is therein emphasised. When S. Paul says, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," he is expressing this law. When we are warned that we cannot "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles" the same law is impressed upon us. "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap" reiterates the same fact. *Life takes permanent distinctions here.* Hereafter it may be modified or developed in detail, but the general direction followed remains the same. There is nothing mysterious about this—the mystery is that men should ever have thought that it could be otherwise—that they should have imagined some magic quality in death, bringing about an arrest or reversal of character. Consider, whether or not hitherto, you have viewed your life as one fact, going in a certain direction? Whether or not heaven and hell have meant to you life worked out to ultimate conclusions on opposing lines? Those whom S. John sees as the dwellers in the heavens are not there by accident or favoritism but because they have chosen God

and held fast to him. The song that they sing about the Throne is essentially the same song that they have long been singing. Those whom they meet in heaven are those whom they have found spiritually congenial on earth — the saints whom they knew or would gladly have known. They are bound close to one another by community of interests. They now find intense joy in community of thought and occupation. Those who now follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, are those who have long followed him: what is now new to them is that they see his Face, not in vision, but unveiled. Consider, whether this heavenly life with its active intercourse of saints, its devout worship, its readiness of service, attracts you now? If it does not attract you now, what reason is there to suppose that it would under any circumstances attract you? If you do not want our Lord now the mere fact of your translation to heaven (were such a thing conceivable) would not alter you. Consider, that what you are and what you can enjoy in the world to come is the fulness of what you are and can enjoy now. Do you to-day want heaven?

Let us pray to have understanding of the vision of our Lord. Pray, to desire heaven.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our

Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

The Church teaches that certain men have been inspired by God the Holy Ghost, and that their writings contain a revelation of the will and purpose of God; it therefore has set these writings apart and called them Holy Scripture. In a way that is an artificial procedure; no doubt many other men have been inspired by God to teach; but the point about the Scriptures is that the Church guarantees to us their message — it adopts it and makes it its own.

But it is not only needful that we should have an accredited message, it is necessary also that we should have an accredited interpretation of it. No Scripture is self-interpretative. What is the meaning of the revelation of the mind of God given in Scripture is gradually made clear to us through the experience of the Church. The understanding and application of revelation is progressive. The new experiences of the growing Church demanded from time to time authoritative statements of the meaning of the revelation committed to it.

The process is not that to meet new needs new

revelation is made, and declared by the voice of authority; rather, as the Church lives by the truth it comes to see farther into the meaning of the truth given it, and draws out that meaning to meet contemporary needs.

The great councils of the Church which have been called together from time to time to combat error have never claimed that they have discovered new truth; they claim to find in the old revelation the truth that applies to the present circumstances, and which had not been dwelt upon or formally stated because the questions which had now to be decided had not before arisen.

It is claimed that the resources of the Church are sufficient to decide any and all questions which are vital to the faith without need of any other or further revelation than that which has been made to us in Holy Scripture. This revelation is studied from generation to generation by the doctors of the Church. Those great saints whom the Church recognises as doctors or accredited teachers are those who have been enabled under the divine guidance to express to the Church its own mind. In other words, they are the organs of the mind of the Church.

However fully the Christian revelation has been stated there still remains the work of assimila-

tion. Each generation has to be taught the revelation. Each generation, starting where its predecessor left off ought to get a little farther along in the work of living by the revelation. We have all the experience of the past to learn from. It is our work to enrich that experience before we hand it on. We look back sometimes with an unduly critical spirit at the deficiencies of the Church in the past; but if we are able to criticise the past with any justice it must be because the past has so taught us that we have advanced beyond it. Let us so teach the future that it will be able to criticise us.

Every vital spiritual experience aids in this work of expressing the meaning of revelation. It is the duty of the individual Christian, not only to know the truth, but to be made free by it. A truth that is merely intellectually grasped may be quite sterile; to be of practical value it must pass into our lives as a mode of action. For all of us there is a door open in heaven and we are invited to come up, and pass in to the experience of the life of union.

I want to insist on this individual appropriation of truth and contribution to experience. It is a means of the constant enrichment of the Christian consciousness as a whole. In any group of people working together for common

ends there is no doubt that they act on one another in such wise that the energy of the group is greater than the sum of the energy of the individual members. So it is in a Christian group, in a congregation, for instance. So far as the members are working together on spiritual lines, earnestly attempting to live by the Gospel, they are undoubtedly aiding one another in the attempt. Any individual is enabled to live at a higher spiritual level because of the action of others on him, than he would be if he were alone. On the other hand those members of the group who are not making any true effort to realise their profession are holding back and dragging down those who are associated with them.

The revelation of the mind of the Spirit which is the starting point of our individual effort is made to those who are "in Christ." There is our first step — that we be in him. Of course we are in him if we have kept the grace of our baptism or, having lost it, been restored through penitence. But we cannot really abide in him long as unfruitful branches. If we do not bring forth we shall be cast out from the union with the life of the vine. Our present work is to deepen this life of union. We are always tempted to think we need more knowledge. I feel quite certain that we all have more knowledge than we

are using. We do not at present need more; what we need now is not greater insight, but closer union. Out of union will come vision, and out of vision will come the ability to deal with the daily details of conduct.

What is needed is sympathy with the mind of Christ — his aim and work. What are the aims of Christ? This would seem to be among them: the production of a spiritual race; a race, that is to say, which puts spiritual development and acquirements before all else. It is only through the production of such a race that the Kingdom of God can be realised. So far we have only sporadic examples of the possibilities of the Life of the Gospel: these we call saints and admire them — from a distance. Until the saint becomes the normal product of our Church life we cannot be said to be making very much progress toward the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is a society in which the mind of Christ is reflected and is a primary aim of Christ.

Are you in sympathy with that? Yes, you say; but are you? Just think what it means — the dominance of spiritual motive in you, the activities of life chosen and governed from the spiritual point of view. Is that really your case? Have you, as matter of fact, expelled worldly motive from your life? Are you expending life's re-

sources with reference to their effect on the advancement of the Kingdom of God? What is the account of your social life? What do you give time to? What sort of people do you entertain? Would you think of excluding from your acquaintance those who are "everywhere received," because of their moral laxity?

You have not gone high enough till you are ready to count all things well lost so that you may win Christ. You have not gone far enough till you are ready to suffer for Christ — till you are ready to bear the reproach of Christ — which as things are at present is often being thought "narrow."

What have you actually lost on the way of ascent toward a better knowledge of Christ? That is one way of estimating the progress of life — by the flying milestones. What have you left behind? Very much?

Beginners on the Ascent are apt to be much occupied with "difficulties" whether of thought or practice. The best way of treating difficulties is to outgrow them. If we hold fast to the spiritual activities of religion it is wonderful to find how quickly the things that troubled and perplexed are left behind. The difficulties are solved by walking. An intense spiritual experience of our Lord is a sufficient answer to all the theoreti-

cal objections which can be raised against Christianity. The practice of religion clears the theory of religion.

If we do not try to remove the difficulties but give ourselves to know Christ the truth of Christ and his relation to us will be revealed to us as we can receive it. And it will so come as a whole experience, which can expand no doubt, but is intelligible as far as it goes. Proceeding in any other way, whatever of truth we get comes in pieces, not very clearly related to each other.

One of the things we soon learn by this method of approach is the meaning and value of sacraments. We do not stop to have an unimpeachable theory of the sacraments, we aim through practice to learn what the sacraments can do. And we speedily find that they are doors which open and admit us to the divine Presence. It is more or less difficult to find Jesus at the end of an argument; we find him easily in the Eucharist.

When we see Jesus revealed to us, we see all things in him.

No more veil! God bids me enter
 By the new and living way —
 Not in trembling hope I venture,
 Boldly I His call obey;
 There, with Him, my God, I meet
 God upon the mercy-seat!

In the robes of spotless whiteness,
With the Blood of priceless worth,
He has gone into that brightness,
Christ rejected from the earth —
Christ accepted there on high,
And in Him do I draw nigh.

Oh, the welcome I have found there,
God in all his love made known!
Oh, the glory that surrounds there
Those accepted in His Son!
Who can tell the depths of bliss
Spoken by the Father's kiss?

Place of glory, place of blessing,
Place where God His heart displays,
All in Thee, O Christ, possessing,
Thine the voice that leads our praise;
Thine the new eternal song,
Through the ages borne along

As within His Temple olden,
There was seen no costly stone,
Nought but cedar, carved and golden,
Nought but Christ, and Christ alone —
So the stones so dearly bought,
God in heaven beholds them not.

All the worth I have before Him
Is the value of the Blood;

I present when I adore Him,
Christ, the First-fruits, unto God.
Him with joy doth God behol
Thus is my acceptance told.

XVIII

THE INVITATION OF THE FELLOW-WORKERS

Revelation, XXII, 17

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst Come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely

Let us picture,

HEAVEN, as it is shown us in the final pages of the Revelation of S. John. It is still in terms of beauty that it is placed before us. We feel as we read such books as the later chapters of Isaiah and the Revelation of S. John that the neglect of the sense of beauty is the neglect of one of the instruments God has given us wherewith to know him. It is not only the roads of truth and goodness that meet before the Throne of God, but the road of beauty joins them there; and it is so exhilarating to travel along that road that we love to join S. John on it. Through his eyes we catch

the flash of "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." We seem to walk down the street by the riverside under the grateful shade of the trees of life. There we have no morning nor evening, no alternation of light and dark, but the perfect light that the Lord God giveth. In that light they who dwell in the City have the vision of the supreme beauty—"They shall see his Face." "And I, John, saw these things and heard them;" and as he listens, there comes the note of urgency: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." When the gates swing open and the trumpet sounds and the summons goes forth, there will, it seems, be found those who are incompetent for the City's life. It is only "they that do his commandments" who "have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City." The gates close, and the sound of weeping and gnashing of teeth reaches us—the lamentation of the "dogs, and the sorcerers, and fornicators and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso loveth and maketh a lie," who are without. We see our Lord sending S. John to the Churches to proclaim the message and to give the invitation: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say,

Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." S. John, when he has come back from his visions of the heavenly world, must have come with a sense of pressure on him to *make* men come, to make them understand the message. Picture S. John, in his church at Ephesus, proclaiming the Gospel-summons to repentance. With what conviction and force he must have spoken! With what an intense feeling of the awfulness of his message! He, John, had known and seen so much! And then look out into the streets of Ephesus and see the idle, pleasure-seeking crowd float by, contemptuous of the voice of this prophet, heedless of his message, not even thinking it worth while to pause long enough to find what it is about! Think of the experiences of S. John's life and of all that he had to tell men, of which we get a little in the Gospel and the Revelation, and then think of how few in actual numbers his converts would have been!

Consider, first,

How often we hear it said that the Christian pictures of heaven are unattractive! But if by pictures of heaven it is meant heaven as it is depicted by S. John, it can only be unattractive because the ideal elements of the spiritual life, the

worship and service of God and the society of the saints, do not appeal. Indeed, S. John's visions of the heavenly life would seem to be a distinct challenge to our ideals. The fact is that we form ideals based on the passions and appetites of our nature and demand that they shall be fulfilled in the future, or we have no use for the future: but in fact it is the future which should control the formation of our ideals. We look forward in life and act in reference to what the future will probably contain. Why stop with this life? The very value of such a book as the Revelations is that it gives us sufficient knowledge of the future to control our ideals. If we believe it at all, we have ascertained the fact that certain character-qualities are of permanent value and others are not. As wise master builders we are enabled to shape life with reference to its final development. It would certainly be of great value to us in this world if we could know what would be the situation of the child we are undertaking to train, fifty years hence. There would be a certainty and a precision of detail in our training that there could not be otherwise. But we do know what will be the situation of the saved soul in the eternal world, and therefore we can shape character in accordance with this knowledge. There may be great hesitancy as to the secular

training of the child ; there need be none as to his spiritual training. The sort of character he must possess is known and the methods of its acquisition are known ; and likewise the urgency of the work is known. " Behold, I come quickly " is the message to every man. The Gospel Pilgrim stands with girt loins and lighted lamp, waiting for the coming of the Master. He has no uncertainty about what he ought to do or be. His only uncertainty is when his personal summons to the Presence will come ; in any case he knows that he must be always ready, whether at even or in the morning or at cock-crow, lest the Master, coming suddenly, shall find him sleeping. Consider our Lord's ideal of his disciple, as of one always ready, always with his work done, each day's labor accomplished when the night falls and he turns to his rest in the expectation of another day. In such a case it will not matter whether another day comes : or if instead the day that breaks be the morning of the Resurrection.

Consider, second,

Whether you have this sense of readiness? Whether in any sense you can be said to be waiting for the divine call? I think we can be said to be ready for the coming of Christ if in this life we have actually been working with Christ ; if our

life's work has been, not simply operation but co-operation. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." They are not calling us from a far distance to traverse the space that lies between; but they are with us, holding our hands and leading us on. Christ "trode the wine-press alone," but we do not have to. He came to our aid, and "in all our affliction he was afflicted." The central wonder of the spiritual life as it unfolds to our advancing experience is the help we find by the way. At every moment we find that we can fall back on the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our one risk of failure is in our separation from the mind of Christ to follow our own inclinations and to linger, fascinated, by the sights of the way, rather than to press on to the City of our destination. Consider, not only whether you have some ideal of a life reaching its consummation in the life of the City, but whether you have any sense of the pressing urgency of the vocation that is yours. "Remember Lot's wife." There are those who waste their time in dalliance with the world till their lamps go out, and the Bridegroom comes — and passes. While it is called to-day, is our vocation: when it shall be tomorrow the door will be shut, and we shut out with the lost crowd that knocks in vain at the gate. While it is called to-day hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.

The danger of an unspiritual life is not to be read in what we can see of its effects but must be inferred from what our Lord does to rescue us from it. It may well seem that the life of the world is only passing foolishness and unwitting mistake until we see cast athwart it the shadow of the Cross, on which Jesus is dying for it. If it cost so much to redeem our souls then the way in which we treat our Lord can be no light matter. If the Spirit and the Bride are urgent in their invitation it must be because there is need of haste ere the night fall and the gates be closed. Consider, whether you are hasting on to the Presence, eager to pass through the gates into the City ere the night fall.

Let us pray,

That the Visions of S. John may grow in significance for you. Pray that you may increase in desire for the Beatific Vision.

O God who hast prepared for those who love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love of thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may attain thy gracious promises which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

As the vision of S. John draws near its end the City is revealed in all its splendor. The

urgency of the invitation grows more insistent. Our Lord joins others with himself in his invitation. Added to his voice are the voices of the Spirit and of the Bride which is the Church. Let us dwell on the significance of these added names.

It is the Holy Spirit who carries out the work of the Kingdom of the Incarnation. He is our Lord's Vicar and is sent from him. The temporal mission of the Holy Ghost is the mission of taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us.

He is the converting Spirit. He is all the time dealing with our wills that they may be converted and made one with the will of God. The will that is converted he constantly strengthens. The mind that is doubtful he directs. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, that he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

They who are spiritual, that is, those who set spiritual things first in the out-working of their lives, understand what is the mind of the Spirit and are able to "judge all things"; that is, they have an educated and illumined conscience and without difficulty take the same point of view in

regard to the possibilities and obligations of life as the Spirit. One of the outstanding phenomena of the life of sanctity is its certainty of judgment in the face of any trial or temptation where a rapid decision is to be made. They have the Mind of the Spirit.

It is the influence of the Spirit in the soul that wins us to the appreciation of spiritual ideals — to perceive their beauty and attractiveness. As we look back over a life of increasing spiritual attainment we are impressed by the fact that the beauty of the Spiritual Life has been gradually revealed to us, and as it has been revealed, we have been weaned from the life of worldliness. We were won with some difficulty from this or that attachment to the world ; now as we look back we wonder how we could have been so attracted. The path we have travelled measures the power of the Spirit in our lives. If we are still hesitating and clinging to the world it is because we have not surrendered ourselves to the Spirit. It means that we are still subject to the “will of the flesh.” That is the fortress of the power of darkness that is contending with the power of the Spirit for our souls. The process of passing from the one to the other is described as *dying*. Death is detachment from environment, the ceasing to respond to its stimuli. But this detachment from

the environment of the world, if it is contained in the process of conversion, is coincident with a spiritual resurrection, that is, a becoming consciousness of a new and spiritual environment; "living unto God" is the consciousness of the spiritual.

The passage from the lower to the higher, from death to life, from the natural to the spiritual, is through the higher stooping to take the lower. So our Lord stooped in the Incarnation, and made the spiritual life possible. So through the Spirit he still stoops and assumes us, takes us, that is, into his Incarnate Life.

In a certain limited way the change that is wrought in us by the action of the Spirit is expressed by a change in interests. If you are interested mainly in the world and what it can give you, you are not living the life of the converted. The urge of the spiritual life we express by the word attraction. What are we being drawn to? S. Paul sets the pattern: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise; think on these things." We grow like that with which we closely associate ourselves. The arousing of desire is the work of the Spirit

in us. We offer to the child what we want him to learn to value.

When once the attraction has been felt, we must go on to deeper study of the objects presented, to find the secret of their attractiveness. The drawing power of spiritual objects is limitless.

One of the obstacles that we find constantly in the development of our spiritual life is what I may call the danger of lapse of attention. Continuity of effort we find very difficult. We are roused to a momentary enthusiasm again and again, and under the impulse of it we make resolutions, only to find after a little that we have permitted our attention to wander and the resolutions have come to nothing. How many times have we resolved to make ourselves more familiar with our Bibles, to read fewer novels, and more of the rich literature of devotion! We have determined to overcome our dependence on other people and other things for occupation and interest, and to seek quiet and silence rather than avoid them, that we may give ourselves to the development of our spiritual nature.

It is the constant occupation of our minds with exterior things which prevents us from paying needed attention to those thoughts and desires which from time to time arise in the soul and fill it with a sense of longing to know and love God

better. But while this desire seems at the time to be a perfectly honest and sincere desire, it turns out in the sequel *that we have not time to give to God*. We are busy and troubled about many things — but they are not the things that make for our everlasting peace!

But those deep movements of our inner life which from time to time trouble our self-satisfaction and placidity are in reality attempts of the Spirit to express himself, to make himself heard amid the noise of outer things. The momentary drawing toward the ideals of meditation and prayer which we speedily declare are impossible in so busy a life as ours, are his voice trying to extend an invitation — Come. Come, he says, to these joys of the spiritual life, of the life of communion with your Redeemer; come to those joys which are so delicate, so illusive that you may easily miss them. So he pleads, so he tries to awake in us the hunger for the heavenly treasures. What has been our response?

The Bride too says, Come.

The voice of the Church reaches us in many ways, and our modern temptation is still the temptation of the men of Judea — “Is not this the carpenter’s Son?” Because the voice of the divine invitation comes to us through the human instrument, we concern ourselves with the familiar

and imperfect instrument and decline even to consider that it may be the medium of the more-than-human.

The voice of the Bride is the voice of an authoritative teacher. The Church has a message from God. The world only cares for messages that it can revise from time to time, and resents a message that claims to control belief and conduct under all the changing conditions of human society. The religion the Church offers to us is a *revealed* religion. The things concerning life and the world that we can find out for ourselves God seems to leave us to find when we get ready. The necessity of revealing religion is because its fundamental postulates are things which man cannot find out for himself, and can only know if he be told. And he can only be told by authority, and the truths so told are eternal and not to be revised from time to time.

They concern chiefly God and our relation to God. If we were seeking the shortest possible summary of them we should say that they are concerned with the life of prayer — using prayer in its widest possible meaning. The call of the Church is a call to exercise the powers of our inner being — our spiritual faculties; the ordinary prayer of the Christian, of course; but also the more advanced forms of prayer — such prayer

as is exercised in conscious union with our Lord that we may enter more fully into his mind and become more completely conformed to his will. The path of prayer leads finally to the sacrificial prayer when we pray in union with the one true, eternal Sacrifice for sins.

Who can resist these voices — the Bride, the Spirit, Christ? No one need resist them. Who-soever will, let him come. Let him come to the water of life. One would think the way thither would be crowded — but it never has been. What you who read are concerned with is that to-day it shall see the passage of one pilgrim, even if alone.

Wanderer, rest thy weary feet;
 Shapes and sounds forgotten now —
 Close thine eyes in stillness sweet,
 With thy God alone art thou.
 In the deeps of silence rest,
 Let him work his high behest.

Silence! reasonings hard and keen,
 Still — O longings sad and deep —
 Waken to the morn serene,
 Tangled dreams depart with sleep;
 In the calm eternal day
 Night's wild visions pass away.

In the silence of that dawn
God shall speak his words of grace,
Light that round thy waking shone
Is the radiance of his Face;
Yearning of his heart to thee,
Fills the deep immensity.

Gently loosens he thy hold
Of the treasured former things —
Loves and joys that were of old,
Shapes to which the spirit clings —
And alone, alone he stands,
Stretching forth beseeching hands.

Lo, the soul thy love has bought,
Through the ages, Lord, am I,
Knowing nought, and willing nought,
Thine alone eternally —
Thine, the Bride thy love has won,
Gift of God to Christ his Son.

In thy strength my soul is still
Clay within the potter's hands,
Moulded by thy tender will
Mightier than all commands;
Shaped and moved by thee alone,
Now, and evermore thine own.¹

¹ Ter Steegen.

XIX

THE WELCOME

S. Matt. XXV, 34

Let us listen to the words of Our Lord:

Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Let us picture,

THE nations gathered for judgment before our blessed Lord. "The judgment is set and the books are opened." Try to see our Lord in his glory; no longer as at his first coming, in humiliation, surrounded by the hosts of the holy Angels. Try to see yourself somewhere in this multitude, waiting to be judged. Think how you will feel. You will really know what the result of the judgment is going to be in your case by the way in which you feel toward the Judge. If you are looking on the glory of his Face with love and adoration, you will be safe. Look once more at the field where the nations are being marshalled

by the Angels. See them falling into their places and being ranged, rank on rank, on the right and left of the Judge. Perhaps you will not be so terrified or so self-centered but that you will look about you for faces you will recognise. Then will come the silence, while all await the sentence. From your place you hear the King saying: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Will your heart leap for joy as you hear those words? Will you recognise yourself in the picture that our Lord draws of those who are blessed of the Father? Or will you be standing disconsolate on the left hand, as these troop away to the life eternal? Remember, that there are many things which God commands that we may disregard. There are many obligations that we may leave unfulfilled. We may impatiently shake off control and disdain God's commandments. But the time during which this is possible comes to an end, and the day dawns when we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We may be feverish in the pursuit of self-gratification while it is daylight; but the night cometh. We cannot put off the hour of the Judgment.

O day of wrath! O day of mourning!

See fulfill'd the prophets' warning,
Heav'n and earth in ashes burning!

O what fear man's bosom rendeth,
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth.

Look once more on the face of the Judge. It is the Face of One who died for you upon the Cross. It is the Face of One who has followed you all your life with the offer of his mercy. It is a Face that ought to have become familiar, because you have seen it looking out of all the duties of your life. If it is a Face that you have learned to love, then the Judgment will be like the breaking of a child's dream when he opens his eyes and sees the face of his mother bending over him. There is no fear to him that is in Christ Jesus because nothing can separate him from his love. "Neither death nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "They shall see his Face."

Consider, first,

On what this judgment is based. The nations are judged by their relation to our Lord as they have found him manifested in his members. They have not had to ascend into heaven to bring

him down from above, but they have found him nigh them, manifested in the life of his kingdom.

We have given to us a picture which seems almost a photograph of these days in which we live: men shouting, "He is in the desert!" and others crying, "He is in the secret chamber!" Perplexed people whispering, "lo! here, or lo! there." And always he is going silently among us, known to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand. It is a matter of spiritual insight. There are those who deny to life any spiritual value; there are those who without denying merely go their way as those in the days of Noah. But he that is spiritually alert will see Christ everywhere offering himself for our acceptance. He will find him in the Secret Chamber where he pours out his heart's need at his nail-pierced Feet; he will find him in the Desert of the World, in spiritually Dry Places, where "men's talk is of oxen" and their thoughts far from the hidden Lord. When man goes forth to his labor he will find him in the field, beside the forge, by the desk or in the market. When he returns weary at the fall of night, he will find him beside his door. He will see his Face looking out of other faces, and will understand that the ministry to the brother is ministry to him. He does not have to be told: "Inas-

much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." Consider, that there is small need to be blinded in these matters. We have been sufficiently taught that our Lord, so far from leaving us, has gathered us into the unity of his Body, and is manifesting himself through us to our brethren and through our brethren to us. There is small need for anyone who has grasped the outermost fringes of Christ's teaching to blunder concerning the values of life. Spiritual facts and material facts almost classify themselves; and the surprise of those who at the judgment find themselves on the left hand can only be the outcome of a selfishness which shuts its eyes and ears to all the pleading of the Crucified because self-gratification is the only thing it has ever valued. There ought to be no surprise at the sight of the Materialist "going away into everlasting punishment;" it is impossible to conceive any other end for those who have no hope and are without God in the world.

Consider, second,

Whether you are thinking with any seriousness of your life as a preparation for the judgment. That we may be adequately prepared for the judgment there must be a careful seeking to

know the will of God. People think that their conscience is a sufficient guide in these high matters. But that is not so; it is quite easy to have an ignorant or an ill-informed conscience. Conscience is only a safe guide when we have done all that we can to instruct it. We can hardly rely on good intentions, or on "our heart being in the right place" as the ground of our acceptance at the judgment, after a life of careless laxity or indifference to spiritual truth. The education of the conscience is a very serious matter, and the true ground of education is found in our association with our blessed Lord. He has made it possible for us to understand his teaching and to enter upon the practice of it by virtue of the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. Our appreciation of the meaning of our Lord's life, that is to say, is not solely a matter of intellectual acumen, but it comes from the supernatural enlightenment imparted to us by the Spirit. That we humbly seek to know and interpose no obstacles of sin and self-will is our own contribution to the appreciation of the truth. And when we know the truth, the truth makes us free; frees us, that is, from the bondage of sin and ignorance, into the blessed liberty of the children of God. This practice of the will of our Lord

is really living with him; living so closely to him, so fully in his mind, that we reflect his thought and action. Consider, whether as you look back on your past you find there a growing comprehension of this mind of our Lord? Is your conscience growing clearer so that you have fewer hesitations in the decisions you are called to make? Are you acquiring an habitual insight into spiritual values which is almost instinctive? Do you experience a growing delight in discovering the will of God? Is there less opposition or disappointment when you find that God's will crosses your will? Are you less liable to find excuses for yourself? If your discovery of our Lord's will for you is as the discovery of a great and priceless treasure to gain which you gladly sell all that you may possess, then indeed you can look on with eagerness to the time when you shall stand at the judgment, because you are sure that the unveiling of our Lord there will be for you the discovery of the Face of a Friend.

Let us pray,

For the guidance of the Holy Spirit speaking through the conscience, that we may be ready for the Coming of our Lord.

O God, who didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people by sending to them the light of thy

Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end.

The result of our Lord's invitations is a division among those who are called — a division that does not always show itself in this life but which must show at the day of judgment. Be clear that the division represents not the divine purpose for man, but a human choice, rejecting the divine purpose.

The ultimate account of those who do not respond, I suppose, must be that they find nothing that seems to them desirable in Christ and his Gospel. He is despised of them and rejected. We have only to call to mind the utter contempt with which Christian ideals are spoken of in a large section of modern literature — the section that is most popular with the youth of America to-day. In the place of the ideals of the Christ-life we have set out conceptions of "freedom," "self-determination," "living one's own life." What to-day is found most hateful in the Gospel is that it demands restraint and control.

In our Lord's parable of the Judgment the line of division is determined by attitude toward

Christ. To the protests of those on the left hand that they had not at all seen Christ as he offered himself, the answer is that they had seen the *brother*, and that they should have perceived Christ in him. Christ took upon himself our humanity precisely that he might present himself to us through it. Wherever there is the brother in need there is Christ in the brother pleading for our love and ministry. To the man who has not yet found Christ the readiest path of access is through ministry to the brother. Those who minister to him are on their way to find the Elder Brother the meaning of whose life on earth was service. "I am among you as he that serveth," he pointed out to those who had gone astray in their notion of greatness.

And finding him, and Christ through him, they would have found blessedness. The condition of blessedness is that we be in realised relation to our Lord. The Sermon on the Mount declares the nature of this blessedness: it is the acquisition of the supernatural virtues to which the natural virtues lead up. It is too often true that we are content with the natural virtues and decline to go on.

In the Sermon on the Mount the qualities are stated as attributes of character. They are humility and meekness and the rest. Here the

conditions of acceptance are stated in terms of fruits, that is, as the works of mercy. I suppose it is the same thing viewed from another angle. If we have the character of the Sermon on the Mount we shall abound in good works; if we abound in good works, it will be because we have the character of the Sermon on the Mount — whether we have realised it or no.

To think of good works as having merit is an altogether superficial way of looking at them. They are the evidences of our interior life. They spring out of love. They are the proof of our union with our blessed Lord. We do not produce with a view to the accumulation of merit or to attaining a reward; we produce because Christ is living in us and working in us. The good work is the work of the indwelling Lord.

The stingy Christian, the Christian who is seeking the minimum of obligation, gives evidence of the superficiality of his Christianity. His careful withholding is evidence that his religion is unreal and has no title to be classified as a following of him who gave all to the very Cross that we might live.

The direct evidence of the unreality of the Christian profession of a vast number of Christians to-day is the meagerness of their giving; even their money-giving, to put it on the lowest

grounds. When you compare the voluntary expenditure on pleasure and luxury of the ordinary congregation with its support of the works of the Church, you see at once that these people do not mean what they say when they profess to be the followers of a Master who had not where to lay his head. A Jew gave a tenth of his income to God — what ought a Christian to give?

The result of living for God, of complete consecration to God, is the attainment of blessedness. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," is the welcome that greets such.

The blessedness of heaven is not that we have at length received the reward of well-doing. It is hardly true to think of heaven (I am afraid it is rather a common thought) as the place where what we have been deprived of here is made good, and what we have suffered here is recompensed. If we have served God truly here we have received what we wanted, the sense of the divine presence and approval. The only blessedness we want here or elsewhere is the blessedness of being in harmony with God. What the probation of a Christian means is that there is a growing harmony. What heaven means is that this process has reached its final stage. The temporal through which we struggled with much toil and difficulty, often perplexed and confused, has at

length passed away, and the spiritual has been perfectly acquired. We no longer see through the mirror, in the enigma, but face to face. And in the seeing, we know that our life is justified. We do not want anything more than the love of God that this reveals.

The acceptance of God here in such ways as he reveals himself to us is the beginning of the life of blessedness. We enter on the pursuit of the best we know. The result of this is the expulsion of the undesirable elements of character in the only way in which they can be permanently expelled, by the extrusive power of virtue. The growth of the virtues makes the existence of the vices impossible. The expansion of the Christ-like character is a process of purification.

This process of growth is described as a putting on of Christ. I suppose that that will mean the increasing appropriation of the qualities of his life. This looks like a very difficult task if we allow ourselves to stand outside, as it were, and think of it as a mechanical process, achieved with effort. But the way of achievement is love. If we truly love any quality of the Christ-character we shall acquire it without much difficulty. Love makes all things easy. We only think of the spiritual life as great labor while we are look-

ing at it from a distance; when we love it and run to it, the difficulty passes in great measure.

It is always a mistake to think of ourselves and our efforts as accomplishing anything that is spiritual. We do and can do nothing alone; we do and can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. The first step is to realise that we are indeed in Christ, that he is personally interested in us. So long as we think of him as a Judge looking on with a critical mind at the ineffectiveness of our attempts to follow him, we shall never make much progress; when we learn to think of him as the Friend at the side who is helping and supporting, always sympathetic and loving, we are stimulated to go on.

And the final revelation that he makes of himself will be but the crown and consummation of the process that has been going on. We are growing up into him, and the result will be to find ourselves permanently in him and perfectly knowing him.

It is a process that extends out beyond this world. It goes on "until the day of Jesus Christ"—and, no doubt, beyond. It is a process that is not checked by death—rather death will translate us to more favorable surroundings for growth. But it must at least begin, in some way that is a real beginning, here

Christ reveals himself to us here, and he reveals himself at any time as far as he can. There is nothing on his side that blocks a further revelation. He wants to make himself known.

Do we want to know? Is there a real eagerness for spiritual accomplishment? If there had been in the past would you not be much farther along than you are to-day? Try to understand how much you have held back and frustrated the work of our blessed Lord. He has been saying, "Come," a good many years now, and you have come — how far?

Why have we not more eagerness? We do not know, it is said; but why do we not know? We often seem like men groping about in a dark room neglecting to turn on the light.

For we can have all the light we want — light to see him. And always we shall see him in the same attitude of invitation, eager that we should come nearer to him. We seem to see him with hands stretched out, full of blessing. "Come, inherit the Kingdom *prepared for you*." That is so wonderful!

Draw me to thee, till far within thy rest,
In stillness of thy peace, thy voice I hear —
For ever quieted upon thy breast,
So loved, so near.
By mystery of thy touch my spirit thrilled,

O Magnet all Divine ;
The hunger of my soul for ever stilled,
For thou art mine.
For me, O Lord, the world is all too small,
For I have seen thy face,
Where thy eternal love irradiates all
Within thy secret place.
And therefore from all others, from all else,
Draw thou my soul to thee —
Yea — thou hast broken the enchanter's spells,
And I am free.
Now in the haven of untroubled rest
I land at last,
The hunger, and the thirst, and weary quest,
For ever past.
There, Lord, to lose, in bliss of thy embrace
The recreant will ;
There, in the radiance of thy blessed face,
Be hushed and still ;
There, speechless at thy piercèd Feet
See none and nought beside,
And know but this — that thou art sweet,
That I am satisfied.¹

¹ Ter Steegen.

XX

OUR INVITATION TO JESUS *Revelation XXII, 20*

Let us listen to the words of S. John:

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Let us picture,

THE last years of S. John. All the companions who with him had sat at our Lord's feet and heard his teaching are long dead. But the memories of the days that are gone are not dead. We feel that the passing years would have laid no obliterating hand on the memory of John the Beloved. The figure of our Lord and all that he said and did in the time of the ministry would remain clear because our Lord did not tend to become a thought out of the past but continued a present friend. Because he had experience of our Lord each day, now the memory of the days he had spent with him would remain

vivid. I like to think of S. John in his old age recalling the scenes and the words of the time when he walked by the side of Jesus — that wonderful day when the call came and he left all to follow, that was when he made the choice which no one who makes ever regrets. How often would the night-scene in the Upper Room come to him, where he had leaned on Jesus' breast and heard the grave voice giving the last charge — never could that night grow dim in any of its details. Or that morning when, outrunning Peter, he came first to the sepulchre, and yet went not in. Perhaps that would always remain a puzzle to him — why he stood hesitating at the entrance of the tomb till Peter pushed by him. So as he sits by the church in Ephesus visions of the past come crowding and, it may be, mingle with those other nearer visions, when a door being opened in heaven he looked in and saw the Throne and the Living Creatures and the Elders, and heard the song of Moses and the Lamb and the music of the Harpers harping with their harps. So much of all that he had seen and heard would come back to him as he stood at the altar and repeated the sacramental words which made his altar in Ephesus one with the altar in heaven because the One Sacrifice was being offered on each! And we are glad, as we recall

these things, to have the little glimpses that the tradition of the Church gives us of the old man, thoughtful and kind,—with a flash of the old temper when he learns of the loss of the boy he had trusted to another,—seated among the disciples who gather lovingly about him, and summing up all his teaching in the one sentence: “Children, love one another.” Try and see the man whose experiences were wider and deeper than any other of the sons of men summing them all up in the one word love. That *is* the sum, is it not? for, “God is Love.”

Consider, first,

How the years still draw out and our Lord does not come! We look back across the centuries and see the varied fortunes of the Church and our heart fails us. There at the beginning was Bethlehem and Nazareth and the years of teaching; then Calvary and Joseph’s Garden and the Resurrection. The young life of the Church flows out from these, so vigorous, so eager, meeting the test of its martyr-years so wonderfully! But almost from the beginning the picture becomes blurred. Already, this John the Theologian, bringing the messages of the risen Jesus to the seven Churches, brings blame and bitter reproach for their faithlessness. Darker grow the

shadows as the stream of the centuries flows by. The world which S. John renounced with such sweeping denial sits by the side of a fascinated Church and laughs! Pride and self-will have shattered the Kingdom of God till it is this pitiful ruin we see to-day. Now and again the clouds part and the life of a saint shines in the firmament of the Church as a star flashes through broken storm-clouds. And we reconcile ourselves to the horror of a wrecked Kingdom and even tell ourselves that it does not matter very much — that the work of God is going on all the time. We decline to recognise our own sins and repent; rather, we try to justify our sins as virtues! At moments we rouse ourselves and realise that the world is not being converted, and we question anxiously what is the trouble; but how can the world be converted by those who love it as it is? How can those who are steeped to the lips in the joys the world offers, effectively warn it to flee from the wrath to come? We talk of the coming of the Lord as a regenerating power in human society; but we make regeneration impossible by our self-identification with society as it is. The Day of the Lord to us cannot be light but only darkness, until we have heeded the voice of the Lord which bids us come out of the world and set ourselves against it;

until we take to heart the words of S. John: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father." The Lord will come when we want him, when a converted and united Church has found the meaning of his teaching; only such a Church, united in the love of the Father and of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit, will be ready for the unveiling of the heavens and the Coming of the Judge.

Consider, second,

Whether you are so absorbed in the world and what it is giving you that you are only an ineffective disciple of the risen Jesus, only an imperfect manifestation of his will? To S. John the heavens opened and he saw visions of God. In one way that was a special grace given him; in another, it is true to say that he sees who can see. It is true that we receive from God every man according to his several ability. It is true that he who has ears to hear, hears; and he who has eyes to see, sees. Are you conscious of any vision, of any voice that comes from God? If you are not, is it not most likely that it is because your senses are drugged with the sin of worldliness? Is it true that you do not look to the future with any joy; that the passing years which

carry you visibly nearer to the end, visibly whiter and weaker, bring with them anxiety and dread? Does the sound of the Passing Bell rouse in you thoughts that you strive to put away? *They will not be put away*; you will have to face them. For the physical universe the years may run to centuries and the centuries to milleniums, but not so for you. "The days of our age are three-score years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to four-score years; yet is their strength but labor and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone." What, then, are we going to do? *Are we to continue clinging to a passing world?* Or are we going to make our pious phrases realities, and center our lives where Jesus sitteth on the Right Hand of God? Are we going to realise that the consistent, ever-present antagonist of the Christian life is the WORLD? So long as we are hungry for that, valuing its gifts above all things, unable to dispense with its pleasures, avid of its joys and clinging to its riches, the love of the Father is not in us, and the thought of the coming of Christ is not a joy? Consider, that Jesus is your Redeemer, the Lover of your soul who offers himself to you. Consider the wonder of that offered love! *Why to you?* What have you done? You have only been unfaithful and come short

of the vocation of God for you. You have paid scant attention to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. You have loved the world and the things that are in the world. *But Jesus continues to offer himself for you and to you.* Are you going to get down on your knees now and cry to him? Tell him that you have come back. Tell him that you, unworthy of any love, will try to love. Ask him to wait for you while you repent; to delay so long his coming; and then, having absolved you, to come. Pray, "even so come, Lord Jesus."

Let us pray,

For detachment, for longing, for eagerness. Pray to want to see Jesus.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptised into the death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have through these meditations been listening to the voice of our Lord calling us. He has called us in many ways and on many grounds. As we examine the phenomena of the spiritual

life and notice the manifold ways by which the divine voice reaches us we are impressed with what we might perhaps venture to call the *ingenuity* of God. And as one looks back over one's life one is ashamed of the trouble that one has put God to in the matter of one's spiritual growth. We have had so little spontaneity, so little ambition.

If these meditations have been of any avail they will have done something to arouse desire for our Lord, a looking forward with joy to his coming. Intense desire for the final meeting is perhaps too much to expect of average humanity. We find ourselves inhibited by the thought of what we must go through to attain to our Lord. The will to live is a natural and a right instinct; we have presently a work to do here, a work that God has given. A life of the service of God would be impossible now unless we took a healthy interest in this life and its affairs.

But that does not mean that we are to immerse ourselves in the world to the extent that we dread any thought of separation from it. Our vocation calls us heavenward, and if we have been true to it we must have developed some interest in the future. If there is real desire for our Lord that will show itself in various ways.

It will show itself in detachment. Detachment is a certain indifference toward material things and pleasures and gratifications. Its index is that we should be always ready to give them up. We may not be called to give them up; we may have a very real joy in them as the gift of God to us; but we hold them subject to the will of the Giver, and never balance them against spiritual acquisition or the call to serve. S. Paul's attitude is the ideal: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ."

There will be a growing emphasis on the spiritual aspects of life. It is interesting to look back and see how the spiritual has come to have meaning for us. Once it was rather a dim word, and then with growing experience we began to assign it content, and it became richer and richer. Run over in your own mind what you now mean by *spiritual*. See how you have lived into a spiritual experience until "spiritual" now means the intercourse of your spirit with Christ. A real friendship has grown up between you and our

Lord, which is marked by acts on either side — prayers and graces.

As the meaning of *Spiritual* grows more rich it acts as a test of values. We are able to untangle the web of complex motives and get rid of the worldly and hold to those which have issue in the permanent qualities of character. Out of all that life offers we are learning to make selection of those things which we can take with us as a permanent treasure. "We take nothing out of this world" is true only of material things. We do take all the spiritual riches we can acquire. The works of the flesh end here; the fruits of the Spirit are reaped and stored for eternity.

Advancement in spiritual attainment is marked by growth in the enjoyment of religion. One pities those to whom religion stands for a round of duty that has to be performed under penalty. Such a religion is really a manifestation of fear. True religion is an expression of joy. And it is a joy that is possible under conditions of difficulty and hardness. One who has a great work to accomplish is obliged to throw into the doing of it all the energy of his life, and comes from it utterly exhausted; but the doing of it was attended with great and growing joy; so the Christian finds life an unending battle, and the victory

that he wins only the prelude to a greater struggle; but in the struggle itself he finds that joy is his. I do not know why we should assume that joy is a phenomenon of sloth; in reality it is an attendant on victory.

As we push upward, our vision clears. While we are in the valley the clouds obscure the view of the peak of the mountain. But struggle up through the mists and you come out above the clouds. There is always the cloud belt about the spiritual life. It is an illusion of the foothills that the path will be easy, that we have already triumphed before we have well begun. The easy slope encourages the beginner; but presently the rough climbing begins. But we do not go on blindly; there was some vision before we started or we should not have wanted to begin. God is always showing himself to us, and shows himself just as fully as we are able to see. The limitation is all on our side. We might see so much more than we do! I remember a man who built his house in a valley shut in on all sides; he said he did not want a distant view. I think there are a good many Christians like that — they are content to sing, “one step enough for me.” But at least one would be expected to desire some vision of the end, for what one is seeking is Christ. Unless we can in some degree

see him now we lack the impulse to go on. Lack of vision — extended vision — is one of the things which prompt sloth.

Thus we look from the outset for a certain coming of our Lord to our souls. Our prayers are not just hands groping in the dark, but hands stretched out to find our Lord. We should not stretch them out at all unless we found. The very desire to find him more is an indication that we have found him already. Or rather, it is an indication that he has found us. "If I had not found thee, thou wouldst not have found me."

It is not so much the *presence* of our Lord that is being gradually revealed to us, as it is the *meaning* of our Lord. A rapid turning of the leaves of a book gives us a rough notion of its contents, while it takes long hours to master it; so to find the meaning of our Lord is the inexhaustible work of love throughout eternity. The more we desire, the more he gives himself.

The desire that he arouses is the desire to know now. We sometimes hear people talk as though they were looking forward to the end of the life as the time when they would come to know our Lord. But here is the time and place to know. Our Lord's promise was that he would not leave us orphans but that he would come to us; and

surely we are finding him in our lives. How could we go on praying and making our communions if we did not find him in them? All life would go out of our spiritual acts unless he were there. I cannot fancy keeping on in the practice of religion except as that practice held a consciousness of our Lord.

It is not through hope of the future but through present experience that we come to be certain of his love, his care for us. We grow in the certainty of his love as a personal thing. Inconceivable as it is that he should care for me, **yet** am I absolutely certain that he does. Why he does I do not know; that he does I do know. It has been the history of my life that he does.

Therefore we look on, on the basis of this experience to a further knowledge of him. Therefore we are eager for a further revelation. Therefore we long for the fuller unfolding. Therefore as our path extends nearer and nearer to the end of the temporal, we gladly think of the completion of our warfare and the ending of the course, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

We do not shrink from the meeting of what lies beyond death. We do not know, pessimists say, what lies on the other side of death. But we Christians, at least, do know. We know that

the coming death is the coming of our Blessed Lord. We do not care to know very much of the detail beyond that. The other things do not so much matter. That we shall find our friends in Christ; that we shall find the blessed saints of God; that will be wonderful, and we dwell on the splendor of the experiences that await us. But what fills us with joy is the thought of our Lord himself, that at last we shall find life's meaning when we see it in him. We shall see Jesus, and the rest does not matter.

So we wait, not patiently and submissively but eagerly, as those who look for the coming of a great love. All that we have lived for is soon to be accomplished, as the gates swing open and the Lord comes.

Even so come, Lord Jesus.

O Dew abundant from the depths divine,
O sweet white Flower, pure as the mountain snow,
O precious Fruit, of that celestial Flower,
O Ransome from the everlasting woe —
Thou holy Sacrifice for sins of men,
The Gift that the eternal Father gave —
O Dew of Life, in thee I live again,
By thee who camest down to seek and save.
I see thee small in low and humble guise,
And me thou seest, great in shame and sin —
Lord, I would be thy daily sacrifice,

Though I am worthless, vile, and foul within.
Yet into that mean cup thy grace will pour
The Love that overflows for evermore.¹

¹S. Mechthild of Magdeburg.

THE END



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Nov. 2005

Preservation Technologies

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 053 798 1